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Nicomachean Ethics

A Critical Guide

Edited by
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ARISTOTLE'S *NICOMACHEAN ETHICS*

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is one of the most important ethical treatises ever written, and has had a profound influence on the subsequent development of ethics and moral psychology. This collection of newly commissioned essays, written by both senior and younger scholars in the field, presents a thorough and close examination of the work. The essays address a broad range of issues including the compositional integrity of the *Ethics*, the nature of desire, the value of emotions, happiness, and the virtues. The result is a volume which will challenge and advance the scholarship on the *Ethics*, establishing new ways of viewing and appreciating the work for all scholars of Aristotle.

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Nicomachean Ethics

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JON MILLER

Queen's University, Kingston



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Abbreviations and transliteration

Common abbreviations are used when citing Aristotle, Plato, and other major figures from the history of philosophy.¹ There is slight variation from author to author. Because it is always plain what work is being referred to, I have not attempted to impose a single standard.

Also, Greek words have been transliterated into Roman characters. It is often possible to use different transliterations for the same Greek word. Since the differences, when they occur, do not matter very much, I did not enforce consistency across all authors.

¹ One list of abbreviations for Aristotle can be found in Barnes (1995), pp. xxiv–xxv.

Introduction

Jon Miller

Introductions to scholarly books can serve different ends. One of these might be to convince prospective buyers of the value of the volume before them. In the present case, since the contents of this volume are about another – Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* – a dual pitch might seem necessary. About the *Nicomachean Ethics* (*N.E.*), Jonathan Barnes has written: “I shall not attempt to extol the merits of the *Ethics*: a good wine needs no bush; and it is mere impertinence to advertise the rarest of vintages.”¹ Barnes is so obviously right that I shall not talk at all about Aristotle’s book. As for this one, I shall speak briefly to the importance of the papers it presents toward the end of my Introduction. For the most part, however, I must let those papers sell themselves. Only by reading them can their value be fully appreciated.

A different end that introductions might serve is preparing readers for what they are about to encounter. Here, too, I will distinguish between the *N.E.* and the present volume. A number of superb introductions to the *N.E.* are already in print.² I could add little, if anything, to them, so I shall not try. On the other hand, I will sketch the general contours of this volume as well as provide a precis for each paper. These can be found in section v of my Introduction. For fear of being long-winded, I have kept the synopses short. It is to be hoped that they will be useful summaries of the book’s contents but they are no substitute for them.

A possible third goal of introductions is to complement the main body of the work, not by previewing it but by covering different and related material. That is what I have chosen to do with my Introduction. The papers constituting this volume are analytical and, for the most part, ahistorical, in the sense that they reconstruct and evaluate Aristotle’s

¹ Barnes (1976), p. 10.

² For brief primers, see, inter alia, Barnes (1976), Crisp (2000), and Broadie (2002). For monographs, Urmson (1988) and Pakaluk (2005).

arguments without either (a) situating them in their time and place or (b) taking into account any but the most recent history of scholarship on Aristotle. There is certainly nothing wrong with this kind of history of philosophy. On the contrary, it has the virtue of keeping the philosophical importance of the subject matter front-and-centre, something which can be lost in historicist approaches. At the same time, I think this volume would be enhanced by consideration of these subjects, for which reason I devote the bulk of my Introduction to them. Or rather, to one of them. I cannot possibly do justice to both (a) and (b) in the space available. So I will dip into (b). This is also a vast subject, far exceeding my abilities. Hence I will selectively deal with what now appears to be a surprising episode in Aristotle's long history: the time – not too long ago – when he did not matter much.³

I

As a survey of major works from the period shows, Aristotle did not play a major role in Anglo-American moral philosophy for nearly 100 years, starting in the 1870s.⁴ His prospects might have seemed high at the beginning of this period. Henry Sidgwick, who brought out the first edition of his magisterial *The Methods of Ethics* in 1874, was an excellent classical scholar who thought very highly of Aristotle. For example, Sidgwick tells us in the Preface to the sixth edition of *Methods* (there would eventually be seven editions altogether) that great admiration for Aristotle's method led him to emulate aspects of it:

What [Aristotle] gave us there [i.e., in Books II–IV of the *N.E.*] was the Common Sense Morality of Greece, reduced to consistency by careful comparison: given not as something external to him but as what “we” – he and others – think, ascertained by reflection.

Might I not imitate this: do the same for *our* morality here and now, in the same manner of impartial reflection on current opinion?

Indeed *ought* I not to do this before deciding on the question whether I had or had not a system of moral intuitions? At any rate, the result would be useful, whatever conclusion I came to.

³ For more extensive accounts of the reception and influence of Aristotle's ethics, see Hoffman *et al.* (in press); the pertinent sections of Irwin (2007–09); and Miller (in press).

⁴ There is inevitably some arbitrariness in starting with the 1870s as opposed to a decade earlier or later. Still, at least three events make this decade pivotal for the history of Anglo-American ethics: Mill's death in 1873, Sidgwick's publication of *Methods* the following year, and Bradley's release of *Ethical Studies* two years after that. With these developments, the stage was set for a new generation of Utilitarians as well as a new powerful anti-Utilitarian movement. Together, they would determine the course of moral philosophy well into the next century.

So this was the part of my book first written (Book iii., chaps. i.–xi.), and a certain imitation of Aristotle's manner was very marked in it at first, and though I have tried to remove it where it seemed to me affected or pedantic, it still remains to some extent.⁵

Sidgwick was not merely an admirer of Aristotle's; he also studied him carefully, acquiring a fine-grained knowledge of the *N.E.* that would be the envy of many philosophers nowadays. For instance, he goes so far as to pass judgment on the compositional integrity of the *N.E.* in his *Outlines of the History of Ethics*. There he argues that Books v–vii of the *N.E.* are not “Aristotle's work in the same sense in which the rest of the treatise is” but rather “they were intended by the disciple who composed them to convey pure Aristotelian doctrine.”⁶

All of the foregoing notwithstanding, when Sidgwick actually developed his ethical theory, he did not incorporate many Aristotelian ideas into it. None of the three “methods of ethics” that Sidgwick investigates in detail could be called Aristotelian – certainly, Sidgwick does not describe them as such. Additionally, Sidgwick flatly contradicts Aristotle on the nature of philosophical ethics. Aristotle famously held that “We must be content, then, when talking about things of this sort [i.e., fine things and just things and good things], to show what is true about them roughly and in outline” (*N.E.* 1.3, 1094b20–21). By contrast, Sidgwick's whole purpose in *Methods* was to raise ethics to the level of a science.⁷ Besides important disagreement on the aspirations of ethical inquiry, Sidgwick differed from Aristotle on substantive issues. I shall come to these in section III of my Introduction, so for now, let me offer a quotation from Sidgwick's *History of Ethics* that encapsulates, to the extent that any single sentence can, his appreciation of Aristotle: “On the whole, there is probably no treatise so masterly as Aristotle's *Ethics*, and containing so much close and valid thought, that yet leaves on the reader's mind so strong an impression of dispersive and incomplete work.”⁸

If Sidgwick allowed Aristotle at least some role in his ethics, most of his successors entirely wrote him out of their theories. For example, two years after the initial publication of Sidgwick's *Methods*, F. H. Bradley released a very different piece of moral philosophy. Called *Ethical Studies* (first published 1876), it consists of seven essays, each of which examines a different moral proposition. I shall provide a further account of Bradley's

⁵ Sidgwick (1907), p. xxii. ⁶ Sidgwick (1902), p. 61n.1.

⁷ See Sidgwick (1907), pp. 1–2, together with Schneewind (1977), p. 191.

⁸ Sidgwick (1902), p. 70.

work below. At this juncture, I want just to note how little Aristotle matters to Bradley. Aristotle comes up only twice in the entire work and in neither of those places does Bradley actually engage him. In the first passage, he simply cites *N.E.* 1.13 in support of the claim that “present grief for a past event” is evidence of the prior existence of “a presumable will to the contrary” of what actually transpired.⁹ In the second, Bradley writes that “If ‘happiness’ means well-being or perfection of life, then I am content to say that, with Plato and Aristotle, I hold happiness to be the end.”¹⁰ There are reasons, which I shall discuss soon enough, why Bradley does not engage Aristotle. For now, the point to notice is how incidental Aristotle is to his ethics.

The same was true of C. D. Broad, who flourished a couple generations after Sidgwick and Bradley.¹¹ In his *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, Broad set out to expound on those moral theories which “give a very fair idea of the range of possible views on the subject.”¹² While he admits that the five he selected may not “exhaust all the alternatives,”¹³ Broad argues that they are the most important contenders. Noticeably absent from Broad’s list is Aristotle. Indeed, the only allusion to Aristotle in the entire volume is to his *Metaphysics*, which Broad hails as “the most important philosophical work” to appear in Europe prior to Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*.¹⁴ This remark underscores Broad’s respect for some of Aristotle’s accomplishments. It is not a sense of the failure of Aristotle’s total system that led Broad to exclude him from his study so much as a conviction that Aristotle’s ethics weren’t important enough.

A contemporary of Broad’s was Sir William David Ross. To philosophers in the twenty-first century, Ross is mainly remembered as an outstanding editor, translator, and commentator of Greek philosophy, especially Aristotle. In addition to this, however, Ross also made important contributions to moral theory. In particular, his *The Right and the Good* has been hailed as the “pinnacle of ethical intuitionism.”¹⁵ Given his unsurpassed knowledge of Aristotle, it is to be expected that Aristotelian ideas would make their way into Ross’s book. And indeed, it has recently been argued that some of “Aristotle’s meta-ethical commitments have a close affinity to the theory of *prima facie* duties developed by” Ross.¹⁶ For

⁹ Bradley (1962), p. 43. ¹⁰ Bradley (1962), p. 140.

¹¹ In case anyone is worried about the jump in time, let me ask for patience. I will soon talk about other philosophers who thrived in the gap between Sidgwick/Bradley and Broad/Ross.

¹² Broad (1930), p. 1. ¹³ Broad (1930), p. 1. ¹⁴ Broad (1930), p. 10.

¹⁵ Stratton-Lake (2002), p. ix. ¹⁶ Nielsen (2007), p. 292.

both Aristotle and Ross, “moral rules of thumb are sometimes overridden by claims stemming from particular features of the situation.”¹⁷

I do not wish to dispute the coincidence of views on this important if rather narrow issue. I do, however, want to maintain that Ross’s overall theory is not indebted to Aristotle. Quite apart from the scarcity of overt references to Aristotle in *The Right and the Good* (only three versus; at least ten for Kant), there are obvious conceptual differences between the two philosophers’ ethical systems. A couple of examples will have to suffice to make my point. Ross’s moral epistemology is firmly committed to the idea that the value of an act such as fulfilling a promise is “self-evident just as a mathematical axiom, or the validity of a form of inference, is evident. The moral order expressed in [this sort of action] is just as much part of the fundamental nature of the universe ... as is the spatial or numerical structure expressed in the axioms of geometry or arithmetic.”¹⁸ Aristotle’s moral epistemology, which supposes that our perception of moral truths is affected by our characters, could hardly be more different.¹⁹ The second example concerns the orientation of Ross’s system. While it is true that Ross (like Aristotle) emphasizes the complexity of moral life,²⁰ it is also the case that Ross does not make moral life as a whole the locus of his discussion. Instead, he is (like Kant) much more concerned with understanding and enumerating our duties. As Stuart Hampshire puts it, whereas “Aristotle is almost entirely concerned to analyse the problems of the moral *agent*,” Ross (like other contemporary philosophers) seems “to be primarily concerned to analyse the problems of the moral *judge* or critic.”²¹

Toward the end of the era that I am canvassing, Kurt Baier published *The Moral Point of View*. At the beginning of this work, Baier proposes that there are “three fundamental questions of ethics”: “(a) Should anyone do what is right when doing so is not to his advantage and if so why? (b) Does anyone do what is right when doing so is not to his advantage and if so why? (c) Can anyone know what is right and if so how?”²² After an initial examination of these questions, Baier concludes in frustration that none of them “has so far been satisfactorily answered.”²³ The problem has to do with the “double nature of moral judgments,” which are (1) “obviously designed to guide us” but also (2) “meant to tell us something.”²⁴

¹⁷ Nielsen (2007), p. 293. ¹⁸ Ross (2002), pp. 29–30.

¹⁹ For more on Aristotle, see Broadie (1991), p. 168, and Darwall (1998), pp. 200–01.

²⁰ See, e.g., Ross (2002), p. 16. ²¹ Hampshire (1949), p. 467.

²² Baier (1958), pp. 4–5. ²³ Baier (1958), p. 45. ²⁴ Baier (1958), p. 46.

Insofar as moral judgments are supposed to guide us, the “emotive theory” of ethics is plausible. But insofar as such judgments are meant to tell us something and not merely influence our behavior, those theories of ethics which maintain that “there is something to know in morality” become attractive. The fact that moral judgments are supposed to both guide and inform us leads Baier to elevate a fourth question as logically prior to the others. That question is “What ought I to do?”²⁵

As he grapples with the issues, Baier does not ignore or overlook the views of philosophers from the past. Given how seriously he takes self-interest and the need for the justification of morality, it is not surprising that Baier should make ample use of Hobbes.²⁶ And since he aims to show how morality can be rationally grounded, it is natural for him to take on Hume’s skepticism about the practical abilities of reason.²⁷ Likewise, Baier discusses with critical admiration Kant’s conviction that “Reason must be, at least at times, the master and not merely the slave of the passions.”²⁸ Baier’s extensive use of great moral philosophers from history makes the absence of Aristotle, who does not even merit a line in the index to Baier’s book, all the more striking. Like other philosophers of his day, Baier was well read in the history of philosophy, including the writings of Aristotle. Despite this, he didn’t see the value of bringing Aristotle to bear on contemporary moral theory.

In 1960, Mary Warnock published the first edition of her *Ethics since 1900*. This slender volume, which went through two subsequent editions as well as multiple reprintings, attempts to tell the story of philosophical ethics in England, France, and the United States until the end of the period that I have been discussing. Though opinionated, it is helpful. When read with the aim of understanding how Aristotle factored into philosophical ethics of the time, it is striking just how *unimportant* he was. Whether the subject was G. E. Moore, ethical intuitionism, the emotive theory of ethics, Sartre, or even moral psychology, Warnock does not deem it necessary to relate the issues or philosophers under consideration to Aristotle. From her perspective, philosophical ethics just did not use or need Aristotle.

II

This sketch of Anglo-American ethics in the nearly 100 years starting with Sidgwick will not prove anything about Aristotle’s importance – or lack

²⁵ Baier (1958), p. 46. ²⁶ See, e.g., Baier (1958), pp. 310–15.

²⁷ See especially Baier (1958), pp. 258ff. ²⁸ Baier (1958), p. 277.

thereof – to the articulation and defense of moral theories propounded during that period. I am, however, building on the work of others.²⁹ With their assistance, I hope that my overarching point will be plausible. With few exceptions,³⁰ Aristotle was not central to philosophical ethics during the era under consideration. The next and obvious question to ask is why. What were the reasons for his sidelining?

For some philosophers, the answer undoubtedly had to do with their low opinion of Aristotle. In the previous section, I said that C. D. Broad greatly respected Aristotle's metaphysics if not his ethics. By contrast, Bertrand Russell thought that all aspects of Aristotle's legacy were disastrous. He wrote in *The History of Western Philosophy* (first published 1945) that since "the seventeenth century, almost every serious intellectual advance has had to begin with an attack on some Aristotelian doctrine."³¹ Though Russell subjected Aristotle's metaphysical and logical ideas to criticism, he seemed to regard the ethical doctrines as especially odious:

Those who neither fall below nor rise above the level of decent, well-behaved citizens will find in the *Ethics* a systematic account of the principles by which they hold that their conduct should be regulated. Those who demand anything more will be disappointed. The book appeals to the respectable middle-aged, and has been used by them, especially since the seventeenth century, to repress the ardours and enthusiasms of the young. But to a man with any depth of feeling it cannot but be repulsive.³²

Now, Russell is admittedly an unusual figure in the canon that I am addressing. But he was not alone in thinking that Aristotle's ethics were problematic.

For example, Russell's occasional collaborator G. E. Moore did not have much to say about Aristotle in his *Principia Ethica* (first published 1903). To the extent that the Greek did draw the Englishman's attention, however, it was because of an alleged banality or worse. Thus, Moore allows that Aristotle's official definition of virtue "is right, in the main, so far as he says that it is an 'habitual disposition' to perform certain actions."³³ Yet, Moore continues, there is a nuance to the meaning of virtue that Aristotle does not explicitly mention. In addition to being a

²⁹ For extensive analysis, see Irwin (2009), §§81, 84, 86–87. For briefer overviews, see Donagan (2003) and Welchman (in press).

³⁰ One such exception may be found in the work of Thomas Hill Green, such as Green (1883), Book III, Chapter v. For discussion, see Irwin (1992), esp. pp. 290ff.

³¹ Russell (1972), p. 160.

³² Russell (1972), p. 173. At risk of stating the obvious, we need not be concerned about the reliability of Russell's history. It is Russell's opinion of Aristotle's ethics that is germane.

³³ Moore (1962), p. 171.

descriptive term, it can also be an “ethical term” – when we use “virtue” and “vice,” we can “mean to convey praise by the one and dispraise by the other.”³⁴ The normative dimension of virtue raises a new possibility: now a virtue can be a thing that is “good in itself.”³⁵ Although Aristotle may not have overtly embraced this idea, Moore argues that he did construe virtue as “having intrinsic value.”³⁶ Because Moore thinks that virtues are dispositions that are valuable as means, he holds that “to maintain that a virtue ... is good in itself is a gross absurdity.”³⁷ Since Aristotle thinks that virtues have this property, Moore concludes that “Aristotle’s definition of virtue is not adequate and expresses a false ethical judgment.”³⁸ While Moore’s critique of Aristotle centers on the concept of virtue, he does not restrain himself from offering a broader assessment. Aristotle’s overall “treatment of ethics,” Moore writes, is “highly unsystematic and confused, owing to his attempt to base it on the naturalist fallacy.”³⁹

Russell and Moore are still well known. A number of philosophers to whom history has been not so kind also had little regard for Aristotle. In words presaging those that Russell would use three decades later, Hastings Rashdall had this to say in a book from 1916:

[I]t would be quite unfair to look upon Aristotle as representing the highest ethical thought of the ancient world. Some writers – notably the revered Thomas Hill Green – have at times encouraged the notion that such was the case ... As a matter of fact, Aristotle represents not the highest ethical standard of the ancient world, but in some respects one of the lowest among highly civilized Moralities. His is the least modern, the least universalistic, the least humane – the most intensely aristocratic, particularistic, and intellectualistic – of ancient Moralities. It is the Morality of the little slave-holding aristocratic class in the autonomous City-state.⁴⁰

Writing in a more philosophical vein, H. A. Prichard asks “Why is the *Ethics* so disappointing?”⁴¹ The answer is not

because it really answers two radically different questions as if they were one: (1) “What is the happy life?” (2) “What is the virtuous life?” It is, rather, because Aristotle does not do what we as Moral Philosophers want him to do, *viz.*, to convince us that we really ought to do what in our non-reflective consciousness we have hitherto believed we ought to do, or, if not, to tell us what, if any, are the other things which we really ought to do, and to prove to us that he is right.⁴²

³⁴ Moore (1962), p. 171. ³⁵ Moore (1962), p. 171. ³⁶ Moore (1962), p. 176.

³⁷ Moore (1962), p. 176. ³⁸ Moore (1962), p. 177. ³⁹ Moore (1962), p. 176.

⁴⁰ Rashdall (1916), pp. 240–41. ⁴¹ Prichard (1912), p. 33. ⁴² Prichard (1912), p. 33.

Other less-remembered philosophers who shared Prichard's sense of "disappointment" with Aristotle's ethics include C. I. Lewis and Richard Perry.⁴³

III

The dawn of the twentieth century was philosophically exciting, as advances in evolutionary theory, psychology, logic, and physics had the potential to revolutionize all of philosophy. During periods of extreme upheaval, those who identify themselves with the vanguard can want to dispense with all that previously existed. For some in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as Russell and Moore, Aristotle's ideas were wrong, false, or worse. Not all who turned away from Aristotle, however, did so because they thought he was grotesquely mistaken. Instead, for many, Aristotle was simply irrelevant.

Bradley is an interesting example. In a reprinting of *Ethical Studies* published near the end of the era that I have been speaking about, Richard Wollheim provides an Introduction that tries to sell Bradley to a contemporary audience. Wollheim writes:

One of the most interesting aspects of Bradley's ethical philosophy is the way in which he constantly endeavours to relate morality and its leading ideas to the study and analysis of the mind. In this respect Bradley may have a special significance for our day. For it is a very marked feature of the moral philosophy of the recent past that it has sedulously separated questions of philosophy from questions of psychology. This has been a very important thing to do, and has resulted in the careful distinction of differences traditionally obscured. But now that the differences have been firmly noted, it may well be the task of the moral philosophy of the immediate future no longer to hold apart the two aspects of human behaviour so distinguished.⁴⁴

As Wollheim goes on to say, Aristotle is another philosopher who did not sever questions of ethics from questions of moral psychology. Yet, although Bradley and Aristotle are alike in this vital respect, Bradley still did not call upon Aristotle to make the case for his conception of ethics. This fact demands explanation.

Part of the explanation is obtained by placing Bradley in his context. When he wrote *Ethical Studies*, moral discourse – both within philosophy and in the broader public – was overwhelmingly Utilitarian. Bradley

⁴³ For more, see Donagan (2003), p. 143, and Welchman (in press).

⁴⁴ Wollheim (1962), p. xvi.

regarded Utilitarianism as rebarbative, and he took as a primary objective the dislocation of Utilitarianism from the apex of philosophy and the public realm. Aristotle would not have been a suitable partner in these polemics and so Bradley didn't enlist him.

Bradley's antipathy towards Utilitarianism does not entirely explain the scarcity of references to Aristotle. To the extent that Bradley is remembered nowadays, it is for being the progenitor of idealism, both metaphysical and ethical. In *Ethical Studies*, this idealism manifests itself partially in the avowedly dialectical structure of the book, where Bradley goes through various erroneous moral propositions in order to arrive at a correct one. But it is also evident in the first-order moral theses that Bradley examines. As one example, there is the conception of the moral life, presented in the fifth essay, "My Station and Its Duties." Here Bradley considers the idea of "the community as the real moral organism, which in its members knows and wills itself, and sees the individual to be real just so far as the universal self is in his self, as he in it."⁴⁵ While Bradley ultimately rejects this notion, he enthusiastically holds it as a necessary step in the progression toward truth. To unpack this idea as well as the others which hold his attention across the book's seven essays, Bradley understandably draws upon the great German idealists, especially Hegel. It is also understandable that he would not turn to Aristotle, for Aristotle simply was not an idealist.

So, even though Aristotle and Bradley both thought that ethics should pay heed to psychology, there were other grounds on which Bradley could and did regard Aristotle as irrelevant. A similar story can be told of Sidgwick. As some commentators have noted, Sidgwick did address a number of topics from moral psychology.⁴⁶ Even so, as I said in section 1, Sidgwick did not see himself as reviving Aristotle – he did not make Aristotle central to his project. The reason here is that Sidgwick found himself in deep disagreement with Aristotle on basic questions of ethics. For example, Sidgwick thinks that Aristotle's conception of happiness was incapable of yielding a discernible moral thesis. Like other Greeks, Aristotle thought of happiness as self-realization. Self-realization, however, is inherently vague. So this idea "is to be avoided in a treatise on ethical method."⁴⁷

To cite another example, Sidgwick allows that Aristotle (and Plato) exerts more "influence" over his thinking about the nature of virtue than

⁴⁵ Bradley (1962), p. 187.

⁴⁶ See, e.g., Schneewind (1977), pp. 206ff.

⁴⁷ Sidgwick (1907), p. 91.

“any modern writer.”⁴⁸ Yet, even though Aristotle has helped him more than almost anybody else, Sidgwick is fundamentally dissatisfied with what he has to say on the subject. What we really want to know about the virtues, argues Sidgwick, is “how we are to ascertain the kind of conduct which is properly to be called Virtuous.”⁴⁹ Aristotle fails to bring us near to such knowledge, for he says only “that the Good in conduct is to be found somewhere between different kinds of Bad” and he does not “give us a method for finding it.”⁵⁰

Bradley and Sidgwick are alike in that both allow for connections to be made between morality and psychology. By the middle of the twentieth century, however, mainstream moral philosophy had, to use Wollheim’s phrase, “sedulously separated” the two domains. This is obvious in the work of two great moral philosophers of the day, C. L. Stevenson and R. M. Hare. While the theories presented by Stevenson and Hare differ in important respects – for example, Hare fiercely criticized Stevenson for taking moral statements to be mere expressions of emotion – the similarities in their methodologies and main conclusions matter more for my purposes. In the interests of time, I shall only discuss Hare.

In *The Language of Morals* (first published 1952), Hare opened his inquiry with this definition: “Ethics, as I conceive it, is the logical study of the language of morals.”⁵¹ There are two distinctive features of this definition: (1) that it conceives of ethics as a logical study and (2) that it centers ethics on language. Hare hints at a desire to imbue his work with logical apparatus.⁵² While Hare does not indulge this desire, he remains committed to the ideal of ethics as a logical inquiry. For example, he devotes whole chapters to the logical character of grammatical moods or the nature of inference in moral language. Hare thinks that this approach to ethics generates new and important conclusions about the moral domain.

Contrary to what moral realists have maintained, there are no moral facts or properties. So, for example, moral judgments such as “It was a bad act of Mrs. Smith to travel on the railway without paying her fare”⁵³ are not statements of fact endowed with truth-value. In this respect, moral judgments differ from ordinary non-moral judgments, such as “The earth is round,” which are true or false. Even though moral judgments lack truth-value, Hare does not think it follows that they are simple exclamations of personal preference lacking all pretence of objectivity.

⁴⁸ Sidgwick (1907), p. 375n.1. ⁴⁹ Sidgwick (1907), p. 376. ⁵⁰ Sidgwick (1907), p. 376.

⁵¹ Hare (1964), p. i. ⁵² See Hare (1964), pp. i–ii. ⁵³ Hare (1964), p. 141.

Rather, Hare contends, when we carefully consider the logic of moral judgments, we find that they are “universalisable”: they hold that everyone similarly situated ought or ought not to undertake a given action. What grounds the universality of the judgment is not truth or fact but reason.

Like most of the others whom I have discussed, Hare was well trained in the history of philosophy; references to Aristotle abound in *The Language of Morals*, beginning with the book’s epigraph. The great majority of these references, however, are to either Aristotle’s logical works or passages from his moral treatises where matters of logic, such as the practical syllogism, arise. More importantly than his use of Aristotle, the basic conception of ethics for which Hare stands is not at all Aristotelian. To illustrate just how big the gap is between the two, let me cite one key difference between Hare’s ethics and that of Aristotle. Hare adamantly denies that moral properties cannot be identified with or explained by reference to natural properties. By contrast, Aristotle seems to advance precisely that thesis in his vital *ergon* argument of *N.E.* 1.7. There is a morally best state for humans to be in, Aristotle holds, which is determined by the special or unique function of humans.⁵⁴ Given all the other differences besides this one, Hare’s and Aristotle’s ethics were almost entirely non-overlapping. Since (as I have argued) Aristotle was not a major actor in moral theory of his day, it is entirely understandable that Hare would use Aristotle as an occasional source for ideas but not regard him as a major influence or threat. To Hare as to so many others of his era, Aristotle was simply not relevant.

IV

How times have changed. In the fifty-plus years since Hare first advanced his arguments, moral philosophy has become vastly more welcoming to Aristotle. His ideas and writings form part of the canon for what has come to be called “virtue ethics.” In turn, virtue ethics is now regarded as a legitimate rival to consequentialism and deontology. Together, these “three ways of thinking about morality have come to dominate the landscape of ethical debate.”⁵⁵

⁵⁴ For a brief but illuminating discussion of Aristotle’s realism, see Broadie (2006), pp. 345–50. For more extensive accounts, see the essays collected in Heinaman (1995a).

⁵⁵ Baron *et al.* (1997), p. 1.

Even those who are not partisans of virtue ethics have come to see value in Aristotle. His treatment of *akrasia*, the practical syllogism, friendship, the cultivation of character, happiness – on these and many other topics, contemporary moral philosophers read Aristotle because of the insights he has to offer. As Stephen Darwall, one of today's foremost moral philosophers (and not a virtue ethicist), has written, Aristotle's "ethics are in some ways as fresh and lively as any we can consider."⁵⁶

It is beyond my ken to state exactly why Aristotle has made such a comeback. Part of the explanation, it seems to me, is that moral philosophy had accomplished as much as it could by *not* taking into account the host of issues so prominent in Aristotle. Here I am thinking of Wollheim's remarks, quote above. A great deal was learned by separating "questions of philosophy from questions of psychology." Having exhausted or nearly so the possibilities of this program, it was time to bring psychology back into ethics.

This explanation does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that philosophers had grown impatient with the prevailing trends in moral philosophy. But that is undoubtedly true, too. In 1958, Elizabeth Anscombe published "Modern Moral Philosophy." Here, Anscombe is positively rankled by the failures of recent moral philosophy, especially its inability to understand how ethics depends on psychology:

In present-day philosophy an explanation is required how an unjust man is a bad man, or an unjust action a bad one; to give such an explanation belongs to ethics; but it cannot even be begun until we are equipped with a sound philosophy of psychology. For the proof that an unjust man is a bad man would require a positive account of justice as a "virtue." This part of the subject-matter of ethics is, however, completely closed to us until we have an account of what *type of characteristic* a virtue is – a problem, not of ethics, but of conceptual analysis – and how it relates to the actions in which it is instanced: a matter which I think Aristotle did not succeed in really making clear. For this we certainly need an account at least of what a human action is at all, and how its description as "doing such-and-such" is affected by its motive and by the intention or intentions in it; and for this an account of such concepts is required.⁵⁷

Anscombe's primary objective in this piece was to demonstrate the erroneous presuppositions of moral philosophy in her day; the resuscitation of Aristotle was incidental to her main argument. Indeed, as the above quotation shows, she does not hesitate to criticize Aristotle where she thinks he is mistaken. Nevertheless, once moral philosophers begin the

⁵⁶ Darwall (1998), p. 191. ⁵⁷ Anscombe (1958), pp. 4–5.

necessary task of rejoining ethics and psychology, she plainly thinks that Aristotle is someone they should read.

When philosophers complained about modern moral philosophy, they did not always settle upon the separation of ethics from psychology as the problem. For example, I have already quoted Stuart Hampshire's observation that moral philosophy of the day is almost "a wholly different subject" from the moral philosophy one finds in Aristotle. Hampshire's phraseology here does not imply a judgment about the value of modern moral philosophy but he lays his cards on the table a few pages later. Hampshire writes: "much of contemporary moral philosophy is concerned with a relatively trivial side-issue, or is at the very least incomplete."⁵⁸ For Hampshire, the problem with modern moral philosophy was its overzealous interest in linguistic analysis and meta-ethics. This had led moral philosophy away from the underlying normative issues that count most. Rather than ask with modern moral philosophers "What do we mean by, and how (if at all) do we establish the truth of, sentences used to express moral judgments about our own or other people's actions?", Hampshire thinks that we ought to ask with Aristotle "What sort of arguments do we use in practical deliberation about policies and courses of action and in choosing one kind of life in preference to another?"⁵⁹

To close this short excursus into Aristotle's rise over the past half-century, permit me a quotation:

There are a number of different stories to be told about why an increasing dissatisfaction with deontology and utilitarianism should have resulted in the revival of virtue ethics (and no way of determining which is the most accurate), but certainly any part of any story seems to be that the prevailing literature ignored or sidelined a number of topics that any adequate moral philosophy should address. Two ... [were] motives and moral character; others were moral education, moral wisdom or discernment, friendship and family relationships, a deep concept of happiness, the role of the emotions in our moral life, and the questions of what sort of person I should be, and of how we should live. And where do we find these topics discussed? Lo and behold, in Plato and Aristotle.⁶⁰

Given that she is about to present a theory of virtue ethics, it is natural that Hursthouse should tie her discussion to the two theories that are the main rivals of virtue ethics. I do not think, however, that many people would dispute her main point. No matter their doctrinal commitments, most moral philosophers today recognize the interest and importance

⁵⁸ Hampshire (1949), p. 469.

⁵⁹ Hampshire (1949), p. 467.

⁶⁰ Hursthouse (1999a), pp. 2–3.

of the issues central to Aristotle's writings on ethics, which is why he is widely read once again.

v

In keeping with the rise of Aristotle, numerous monographs, edited volumes, and articles or chapters have appeared on his moral thought in recent decades. Many of these are cited in this volume's bibliography. The ongoing renaissance of Aristotle's ethics makes it possible – or so I hope – to offer the present volume without the usual blush or attempt to justify yet another philosophy book. Instead, I will close my Introduction by briefly summarizing its contents.

Let me start with two general remarks, the first of which concerns the book's basic tenor. This book is part of a series – the Cambridge Critical Guides. Books in this series aim to advance scholarship on the works which they address. They are not intended for first-time readers. In my exchanges with the eleven authors of the individual chapters, I stressed that they could take for granted, on the part of their readers, familiarity with the basic texts (both primary and secondary) and major philosophical issues. As things turned out, while the authors wrote for specialists, I think that they produced arguments which are lucid and pleasingly accessible. They should appeal to a maximum number of the scholarly and philosophical community.

The second general remark is about the book's structure. As I consulted with contributors, I realized that the papers which they would write belonged to thematic groups. So I decided to divide the book into four parts of unequal length. Each part deals with some broad area; the papers in the parts examine discrete issues within that area. As this book is not an introductory text, no attempt is made to offer a comprehensive account of the area in question; many issues will remain unexamined. Instead, readers will find in-depth treatments of the issues which the authors have chosen to discuss.

The book's first part is on a meta-issue, in that it concerns not so much the first-order proposals or problems found in the *N.E.* as the book's composition. This subject can be approached from a number of directions, including: how the *N.E.* relates to the *Eudemian Ethics* and/or the *Magna Moralia*; whether all of the *N.E.* was the work of Aristotle; to what extent our version of the *N.E.* reflects the ordering of Aristotle versus that of his editors. These questions have exercised scholars for generations. We have already seen that Sidgwick does not think all of the *N.E.*

is genuinely Aristotelian (in the sense of being written by Aristotle). More recent scholars who have weighed in include Christopher Rowe, Anthony Kenny, Jonathan Barnes, and John Cooper.⁶¹ In his essay for this volume, Michael Pakaluk shares his thoughts. What interests Pakaluk is whether the various treatises that comprise the *N.E.* can be said to yield a coherent whole. Pakaluk's thought is that the macro-question of whether the *N.E.* is a unified work can only be answered by looking at a series of micro-questions on how and whether different passages belong together. Through a close reading of some of these passages, Pakaluk tries to answer the micro-questions in the affirmative and thereby demonstrate the unity of the work as an entirety.

Part II is on the endlessly fascinating topic of happiness. Its three chapters deal with a cluster of related texts and issues. Susan Sauvé Meyer opens with the famous line, "It is for the sake of happiness that we all do everything else we do" (*N.E.* I.12, 1102a2–3). As Meyer says, the problem with this assertion centers on the "for the sake of" relation. Some commentators (notably Richard Kraut and Gabriel Richardson Lear) take this to entail that *x* can be for the sake of *y* if and only if *x* causally promotes *y*. Others (especially J. L. Ackrill) have denied that any action undertaken for some end must also be a means to that end, on the grounds that there are intrinsically desirable things – things that are pursued for their own sake – which are constituents of happiness. Meyer wants to defend the latter reading, albeit with a twist. She thinks that the "for the sake of" relation needs to be understood in light of Aristotle's remarks on the highest form of happiness found in *N.E.* x.7–8.

The highest form of happiness is also the focus of Norman Dahl's paper. As Dahl notes, an enduring exegetical problem confronting readers of the *N.E.* is squaring the discussion of happiness and the good life found in Book I with the discussion of the same topics given in Book x. While Book I identifies the contemplative life of the intellectual as a candidate for the good, it does not endorse this life over all others. So Book x's full-throated argument for the contemplative life seems out of place to many readers. Dahl does not minimize the difficulty here but he thinks a distinction can help. Going through the scholarly impasse between those who find a contradiction between *N.E.* I and *N.E.* x.7–8 and those who don't, Dahl carefully explains how we can find a way out by attending to the distinction between *a life* devoted to a certain good versus *the good* to which that life is devoted. There is a central good to which the happy

⁶¹ See, respectively, Rowe (1971); Kenny (1978); Barnes (1997); and Cooper (1999b).

life is devoted, Dahl argues, even if the happy life does not always pursue that good. So the happy life is devoted to contemplation, even though it doesn't always engage in contemplation.

A. A. Long is also motivated by the difficulties in reconciling Aristotle's treatment of happiness in *N.E.* 1 with *N.E.* x. His tack, however, differs from Dahl's, in that he abandons the scholarly debates of the recent past. Instead, Long chooses to "see what progress we may make in interpreting Aristotelian *eudaimonia* by reviewing the term's associations with divinity and with *nous*" (Long, below). Long says that scholars have long dwelt on the prominence of divinity in *N.E.* x while underplaying the appearance of the divine in later chapters of *N.E.* 1. Taking his cue from the latter, Long argues that *eudaimonia* in itself is blessed (*makarios*) and as such quasi-divine. This reveals that there are two routes to *eudaimonia*: (1) through the exercise of practical reason, morally virtuous activity, and adequate provision of external good, and (2) through excellent contemplative activity, akin to how the gods are said to think. Long's argument centers on the *N.E.* but he opens with some helpful general remarks on the relation between the divine and *eudaimonia* in Greek philosophical literature as well as Aristotle's remarks in some of his other works on the relation between human identity and *nous* and divinity.

Just as the three chapters of [Part II](#) take up a close cluster of texts and issues, so do most of those from [Part III](#). Klaus Corcilius leads by discussing the crucial notion of habituation and the effect of non-rational psychological impulses on it. Aristotle strenuously argues that good habits are key to virtuous behavior. Forming those habits is not solely or even primarily a task of training the intellect. The better part of the job concerns the proper conditioning of non-rational desires in young people, and helping them to experience pleasure and pain about the right things. Curiously, although young people's non-rational desires as well as their feelings of pleasure and pain must be correctly molded in order for them to become virtuous adults, what precisely this means is unclear. In his paper, Corcilius studies the responsible psychological mechanisms. Because his study concerns non-rational dimensions of the mind, Corcilius must look to Aristotle's natural philosophy – especially the *De Anima* – for guidance. What he learns there, however, has definite applications to the *N.E.*

So described, Corcilius's paper has three main threads: non-rational desires, habituation, and pleasure and pain. Each of these is picked up by one of the three following chapters. Giles Pearson starts with non-rational desires. Where Corcilius devotes his time to the *De Anima*,

however, Pearson considers material internal to the *N.E.* Indeed, the first major portion of his paper is entirely given over to analyzing a passage from *N.E.* VII.6, 1149a25–b3. After clarifying just what this passage says, Pearson proceeds in the second portion of his paper to consider its broader ramifications. Here Pearson explores how non-rational desires can still be said to obey reason, as Aristotle states at *N.E.* I.13, 1102b14. He also goes into the ways in which cognitive states are involved in the formation of non-rational desires, as well as the definitional problem of what makes a desire be “non-rational.” His final section examines the implications for Aristotle’s account of virtue of his claim that the virtuous agent’s non-rational side must both “give way to his rational side” and “actually motivate him to the same course of action as his rational side” (Pearson, below).

Iakovos Vasiliou looks into habituation. It is undeniable, Vasiliou says, that habituation affects the character of agents. But what role does character play in action? More specifically, did Aristotle take the moral worth of actions to be independent or dependent on the character of the agents who perform them? In *N.E.* II.1–3, Vasiliou says, Aristotle seems to hold that “actions are prior to and independent of agents” (Vasiliou, below). After all, he writes in *N.E.* II.1, “we become just by doing just things, moderate by doing moderate things, and courageous by doing courageous things” (1103a34–b2). But *N.E.* II.4 opens with an objection to this idea: “if [agents] are doing what is just and moderate, they are already just and moderate” (1105a19–20). Unless we want to allow people to perform virtuous actions by accident, then they must be just or moderate before they can only perform just or moderate actions. As Vasiliou observes, a great deal rides on how Aristotle should be read, for if he ultimately comes out in favor of the picture painted in *N.E.* II.1–3, then he seems to make action come first and character second. In that case, Aristotle may not be the hero of virtue ethics after all, for the “whole point of virtue ethics is that *character* is primary and *action* secondary” (Vasiliou, below). Vasiliou aims for his discussion to be a contribution toward understanding which reading is supported by the preponderance of evidence.

After Vasiliou, Christopher Shields explores the third of Corcilius’s three threads. Or rather, half of it, for in this paper Shields is just interested in pleasure. Shields opens with Elizabeth Anscombe’s accusation that pleasure “reduced Aristotle to babble” since “he both wanted pleasure to be identical with and to be different from the activity that it is pleasure in” (Anscombe quoted in Shields, [Chapter 8](#)). This is a serious charge, Shields allows, and it is seriously mistaken. So far from being babble, Shields thinks

that Aristotle's view of pleasure "is well motivated, and entirely feasible" (Shields, below). What causes Anscombe and other critics to be mistaken about Aristotle is their failure or refusal to work through the technical terminology which Aristotle relies on when formulating his ideas. This terminology is especially prevalent in the second of the two discussions of pleasure found in the *N.E.*, that of Book x. Shields limits the scope of his argument to this discussion. His primary goal is to explain the theories of change and perception that Aristotle employs here. Shields thinks that once these ideas are correctly understood, the account of pleasure which they support becomes very attractive. They show how it is possible for pleasure to perfect or complete certain psychological activities even as it is itself an activity.

The final chapter in [Part III](#) departs from the issues which occupied the previous four. Stephen Leighton has long worked on Aristotle's theory of emotions (or passions – I will use these words interchangeably). In his contribution to this volume, he inquires into inappropriate and wicked passions. Most emotions are inappropriate for one of three reasons: they are "(i) inappropriate to the situation, (ii) appropriate to the situation but realized in inappropriate ways, or (iii) inappropriate by failing to arise when and where it should" (Leighton, below). So stated, it is possible for most emotions to be appropriate: all they need to be is not violate the conditions (i)–(iii). Most; not all. Aristotle writes: "not every action admits of intermediacy, nor does every affection; for in some cases they have been named in such a way that they are combined with badness from the start" (*N.E.* 11.6, 1107a8–10). Aristotle's examples of these passions – which are wicked – include spite and envy. They "can play no part in a virtuous character, but are felt by those who are bad. They cannot contribute to, but only inhibit, a virtuous or flourishing life" (Leighton, below). While there may be intuitive appeal to Aristotle's naming of envy, for example, as inherently bad, Leighton says that doesn't guarantee the intuition is justified. So he looks into his writings to see whether a defensible account can be found. Since the most extensive depiction of this class of emotions is given in the *Rhetoric*, Leighton uses that material to amplify what's said in the ethical treatises. And this generates "a quandary from which I see no adequate escape" (Leighton, below). While Aristotle's understanding of the inappropriateness and appropriateness of most emotions reasonably shifts as he moves the ethical realm to other domains, he ought to consistently prohibit cultivating or exploiting wicked emotions. Yet the *Rhetoric* "both prepares for expressing wicked passions and arousing them in others" (Leighton, below). There is no way, Leighton concludes, to make sense of this puzzle.

Moving on to [Part iv](#), T. H. Irwin opens with a methodical examination of the word “*kalon*” in Aristotle’s corpus. This notion is central to Aristotle’s ethics; as Irwin writes in his opening sentence, “the *Nicomachean Ethics* is a work of political science, and political science considers ‘just and *kalon* things’ (I.3, 1094b14–15)” (Irwin, below). Despite its importance, much uncertainty surrounds Aristotle’s use of *kalon*. Irwin identifies the main uncertainties and proceeds to remove some of them. In particular, Irwin seeks to dislodge the common practice of using the word “beautiful” when translating “*kalon*” into English. He does not deny that Aristotle took “*kalon*” to have a single sense but he does hold that “this single sense is not captured by ‘beautiful’” (Irwin, below). Instead, he provides a survey of Aristotle’s use of the word across his corpus to show that the *kalon* is fine, admirable, or fitting. While Irwin does talk about translation practices, he does not lose sight of the theoretical issues. There are those who argue that a connection between beauty and morality is proven by Aristotle’s use of *kalon*. There may be such a connection, Irwin concludes, but it will have to be demonstrated by other means.

[Part iv](#) is labelled “Virtues.” Irwin’s paper is somewhat distant from the virtues as usually conceived. For while he argues that the *kalon* is fine, he is not talking of those properties which make their bearers excellent. The final chapter in the volume is more conventionally described as being a contribution to the understanding of Aristotle’s virtue theory, for it takes on one of his hallmark virtues, justice. In *N.E.* v, Aristotle distinguishes between particular justice and general justice. Particular justice is exemplified in situations where agents have to divvy up a limited good, such as food or money, while general justice is “the *activation* of complete excellence” (*N.E.* v.1, 1129b31–32). While there are problems surrounding particular justice, Fossheim says, it is indisputably an ethical virtue. Fossheim is interested in whether the same can be said about general justice. Most commentators think it is an ethical virtue; Fossheim disagrees. He argues that “it is possible to characterize justice in terms of ethical virtue, without thereby holding justice to be an ethical virtue” (Fossheim, below). To make his argument, Fossheim first seeks to show that general justice is not unproblematically subsumed under the category of ethical virtue. Then, more positively, he tries to prove where Aristotle did place general justice: in law and activity – specifically, activity in the political community or *polis* where one lives.

PART I

Textual issues

On the unity of the Nicomachean Ethics

Michael Pakaluk

I THE SEPARATE TREATISES COMPOSING THE *N.E.*

The *Nicomachean Ethics* (*N.E.*) presents itself as composed out of a relatively small number of “treatises” on topics in moral philosophy; the question of the unity of the *N.E.* therefore involves both the question of (i) how coherent each of these treatises is, and also (ii) how well they are knit together to form a coherent whole. Here I shall focus largely on the latter question, although this will require at times some attention to the former.

By “presents itself” I mean two things. First, I mean simply how the *N.E.* appears to a careful reader who has some background knowledge of how Aristotelian texts are constituted and how Aristotle worked as a philosopher. Aristotelian texts are compiled out of “books,” which correspond to the length of a scroll. This is a purely accidental matter, but *in general* this length is exploited by Aristotle as a unit of treatment of a subject.¹ Longer works would be made by joining together discussions parsed according to books.² Aristotle’s own philosophical tendencies fit well with this manner of composition, because his works are generally sparse in system and architectonics: in general he aims to discuss each subject initially on its own terms – almost as if in isolation – as if he is trusting that, if this is done well, then any composition of such discussions will harmonize, on the grounds that, as he says, truth harmonizes with truth (see I.7, 1098b11–12).

Second, and most importantly, I mean how the author or editor of the *N.E.* – the person³ finally responsible for putting the work into the form

¹ This is not unlike how an opinion-page journalist today manages to discuss everything in 750 words; or how academics tailor their thoughts to the standard twenty-five typed pages of a journal article.

² For more on this, see discussions of the ancient lists of Aristotle’s works: Moraux (1951) and Kenny (1978), Chapter 1.

³ Or indeed “persons” – nothing rules out there being more than one editor, working together or successively. There are indeed some signs of multiple editing in the *N.E.*

we find it today – conceived of the work and set up editorial signposts along the way in order to mark and express that conception. These signposts employ the Greek word *peri*, meaning “about” or “concerning,” a term often used in the titles of ancient philosophical texts to identify the subject matter of a work. Now, since *peri* identifies a topic of discussion, it is used at every level of organization in the *N.E.* to mark sub-topics, topics within sub-topics, and even digressions. Thus, if one wished to identify the highest level of structure in the *N.E.*, as the editor conceived it, one would look for uses of *peri* which identified topics which are not in turn placed under any higher topic. These uses are relatively few in number and are found at the start of treatises, and also in a handful of summarizing remarks found at key points in the *N.E.*:

[At the start of I.13] Since happiness is an activity of the soul in accordance with complete virtue, what should be looked into would be the topic of virtue [*peri arêtes*, lit. “concerning virtue”]. (1102a5–6)

[Near the start of VII.1] We need to speak on the topic of lack of control and of softness and delicacy [*peri akrasias kai malakias kai truphēs*], and on the topic of self-control and toughness [*peri engkrateias kai karterias*]. (1145a35–36)

[At the end of VII.14] We’ve spoken on the topic of self-control and lack of control [*peri engkrateias kai akrasias*], and on the topic of pleasure and pain [*peri hedonēs kai lupēs*] ... what remains is for us to talk on the topic of friendship as well [*peri philias*]. (1154b32–34)⁴

[At the start of X.1] What follows after these things is to discuss the topic of pleasure [*peri hedonēs*]. (1172a16)

[At the start of X.6] As we have addressed the topics of the various virtues, friendship, and the various pleasures: what remains is to discuss in outline the topic of happiness [*peri eudamoniās*]. 1176a30–31

These and other editorial comments indicate that, with an important caveat, the editor of the *N.E.* viewed that work as composed of only five treatises:

- “On Virtue” (I.13–VI.13)
- “On Self-Control and Lack of Control” (VII.1–10)
- “On Friendship” (VIII and IX)
- “On Pleasure” (X.1–5)
- “On Happiness” (X.6–8)

The caveat, of course, is that there are two discussions of pleasure; each is referred to in an editorial remark, and yet the last summarizing

⁴ Another editorial remark saying something similar is then placed at the start of Book VIII: “After these things it would follow to discuss the topic of friendship,” 1155a3–4. This is one of the signs of multiple editing mentioned previously.

editorial remark (1176a30–31) does not give any clear recognition of two distinct discussions of pleasure.⁵ This difficulty will be discussed later.

In the outline given above, I indented the topics of self-control, friendship, and pleasure, because these are presented by the editor as though ancillary to the main line of thought of the *N.E.*, which, in a word, is a consideration of virtue as leading to a determination of what happiness is. That they are ancillary is shown by the justifications given for their being introduced at all, all of which make reference to virtue. Self-control and lack of control should be discussed, we are told, since they are conditions of character related to, but not quite the same as, virtue (VII.1, 1145a36–b1). Friendship likewise needs to be discussed because either it simply is a virtue, or it is bound up closely with virtue (VIII.1, 1155a4). Pleasure requires discussion because, if we are to acquire virtue, it is crucial that we take pleasure in and find painful the right sorts of things (X.1, 112a20–27; see also VII.11, 1152b4–6). In a sense, then, there are only two topics of *N.E.*, virtue and happiness, and three topics incidental to these.

In the outline, I also do not classify 1.1–12, as is sometimes done, as itself a treatise on happiness. One reason I do not is that the editor of the *N.E.* does not – that is, he never refers back to Book 1 as having provided a discussion of happiness. When he does propose to discuss “the topic of happiness” (*peri eudaimonias*), as can be seen in 1176a30–31 given above, he takes this discussion as something still left to be done, in Book X, after the other topics have been addressed.⁶ Perhaps one could say that Book 1 is on the topic of the proper *definition* of happiness – or, as Aristotle puts it, “on the topic of happiness, that is, what it is” (*peri de eudaimonias, ti estin*), 1095a20⁷ – but a definition for Aristotle only provides the basis, or first principle, for an investigation of something.⁸ Thus, to discuss the definition is not yet to discuss that thing.⁹

⁵ And yet curiously that passage does use the plural form; it says not that *pleasure* has been discussed, but *pleasures*, sc. types of pleasure.

⁶ Indeed, the editor writes as if the topic of happiness has not even so far been dealt with “in outline” (1176a31)!

⁷ Note that this formula, “concerning X, what it is,” is similar to a standard formula used by Plato in his dialogues when the character Socrates is looking for a definition.

⁸ At 1102a13 (*kata tēn ex' archēs prohairesin*) Aristotle refers to the discussion in Book 1 as setting the direction of the discussion of the *N.E.* and giving it purpose.

⁹ Aristotle refers to the definition of happiness provided in 1.7 also as a “starting point” (*archē*), which in the context means not only a first principle or axiom of the subject of practical philosophy (1198a33–b6), but also as literally the point from which the subsequent discussion of the virtues should start (1098b7). That is why when Aristotle next says that “We need to inquire, as regards this (*peri autēs*), not only what follows from it, and from what components the definition is composed,” the “it” which is the topic of discussion is presumably not happiness but more precisely the “starting point” (*archē*).

A second reason involves the methodology of Book I. That book has the form, not of an inquiry into something already settled and identified, but rather of a search or investigation – often tentative and halting, and frequently revisiting an already stated point – which looks to uncover and identify something.¹⁰ Again, Aristotle accomplishes this in I.7, when he presents a definition of happiness; but then, after he considers a handful of *aporiai* concerning happiness (I.9–12), he moves immediately to a discussion of virtues (*peri aretēs*) – which discussion is viewed as following directly from the definition.

A third reason is that Book I is arguably an introduction, not simply to the discussion of the virtues and happiness, which, as we have seen, constitutes the subject matter of the *N.E.*, but also to the entirety of practical philosophy, which Aristotle refers to as *politikē*, or the art of “proper governance” (II.2, 1094a27).¹¹ As *N.E.* x.9 suggests, Aristotle viewed ethics as the first of two main topics to be dealt with by *politikē* – *N.E.* deals with the practical philosophy of the individual in his immediate social setting (friendships, the family, and voluntary associations), rather than the practical philosophy of “complete” societies (city states).¹² A sign that Book I plays this introductory role, and is not therefore any sort of treatise “about” or “concerning” anything, is that the standpoint of “proper governance”¹³ is at crucial points appealed to in the *N.E.* to justify the introduction of a topic. Here are the main instances:

It seems, too, that anyone who exercises true governance (*ho kat’ aletheian politikos*) is especially diligent about virtue, since his aim is to make his citizens into good men, men who are obedient to the laws. (I.13, 1102a7–10)

We said as well that happiness is an activity of the soul, and if that is how things are, clearly anyone who practices sound governance needs to have some kind of knowledge of the parts of the soul [that is, in order to know about the virtues]. (I.13, 1102a18–23)

¹⁰ Hence verbal adjectives involving investigating, defining, and grasping – the mark of methodological deliberateness, and, incidentally, a distinguishing feature of the language of the *Eudemian Ethics* – are much more common in Book I of the *N.E.* than almost anywhere else: see *skepton*, “we should investigate,” at 1097b14, 1098b9, 1102a6, 14; *peirateon*, “we should attempt,” at 1094a25, 1097a23; and *theteon*, “we should set down,” at 1098a6.

¹¹ This term is also rendered as “political science,” “the art of politics,” and “statecraft,” among others, but no English term or phrase seems quite right.

¹² See I.1, 1094b7–10 for a suggestion, at the very start of the *N.E.*, that the investigation which follows will need to give way to a consideration of “nations and city-states.”

¹³ The standpoint of *politikē* is referred to variously as the standpoint of “the politician” (*ho politikos*, 1102a18); “the framer of laws” (*honomothetēs*, 1094b5); “the architect of the end” (*ho tou telous architectōn*, 1152b2); and “those who philosophize about practical philosophy” (*ho tēn politikē philosophoun*, 1152b1–2).

Anyone who is inquiring into the topic of virtue needs to mark the distinction between the voluntary and the involuntary, and that is additionally useful to lawgivers for the purposes of assigning awards and punishments. (III.I, 1109b34; see also 1180a6)

It is part of the task of anyone who engages in practical philosophy to consider the topic of pleasure and of pain. (VII.II, 1152b1)

Those who frame laws look as if they are even more concerned about friendship <in a city-state> than justice. (VIII.I, 1155a22–24; see also 1160a13)

From an inspection of these topics, it is clear that there is a rough correlation between what we have identified as the main topics of the *N.E.*, and those topics for which Aristotle makes a special appeal to this guiding perspective of *politikē*: virtue; pleasure and pain; friendship.¹⁴

That the outline given above – with perhaps an “Introduction” prefacing it, and serving as the lead-in not only to the *N.E.* but also to the *Politics* – was how the editor of the *N.E.* understood the work as well is reinforced by a consideration of various references, internal to the *N.E.*, which reach back to the beginning of various lines of exposition. Three phrases are used for such back-references: “in the beginning” (*en archēi*); “from the beginning” (*kat’ archas*); and “at the start” (*en tois prōtois*, lit. “among the first points”). The table shows the occurrences of these phrases and what they refer back to.

Of twelve back-references in the *N.E.* “to the beginning”, ten are to discussions found in chapters near or at the beginning of the treatises we have identified. Only the treatise (or treatises) “On Pleasure” is never referred back to in this way.¹⁵ And the discussion in I.I–7 is clearly regarded as preliminary to the *N.E.* as a whole (see references 6, 7, and 8).¹⁶

¹⁴ A consideration of happiness needs no such justification, because it is the very end at which *politikē* aims (*N.E.* 1.1–2). It is a bit surprising that Aristotle does not anywhere explain why lawgivers need to consider self-control and lack of control – even though the difference in moral quality between vice and lack of control would appear to be great. And yet at the end of the discussion, in VII.10, the perspective of *politikē* is indeed adopted, insofar as Aristotle argues that someone who fails at self-control is distinct from a criminal (*adikos*, 1152a17) and lacks *mens rea* (*ou gar epiboulos*, a18); and surely when he considers whether the condition is curable (a27–33), he means in particular curable under sound laws and governance.

¹⁵ This fact might be explained simply by the relatively short length of those two treatises, each only five chapters.

¹⁶ The two exceptions deserve special comment. Reference 5 is to the beginning of a discussion of practical points of reciprocity in friendship, sometimes said to be “on the casuistry of friendship,” that stretches from VIII.13 to IX.3. It is a beginning of sorts, and perhaps the back-reference is vestigial, from some time when the discussion stood as an isolated exposition. Reference 12 is interesting, as it suggests that the editor of the *N.E.* tended to view Books VI and VII as a unity. There is additional evidence for this, and the basis of the linkage of the books would be the concern that *akrasia* (lack of self-control), although clearly motivated by a sense pleasure and pain, is nonetheless deeply incompatible with the intellectual virtue of *phronēsis* (prudence, practical

| Back-reference | Location | Bekker number of reference | Refers to | Bekker number of referent ^a | The beginning of what? |
|------------------------|----------|----------------------------|-----------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <i>en archē</i> | | | | | |
| 1 | I.9 | 1099b29 | I.2 | 1094a27–28 | Introduction |
| 2 | IV.2 | 1122b1 | II.1 | 1103b22–23 | Treatise “On Virtue” |
| 3 | VIII.9 | 1159b25 | VIII.1 | | Treatise “On Friendship” |
| 4 | VIII.13 | 1162a34 | VIII.3 | | Treatise “On Friendship” ^b |
| 5 | IX.3 | 1165b6 | VIII.13 | | — |
| 6 | IX.9 | 1169b28 | I.7 | 1098a16–18 | Introduction |
| 7 | IX.9 | 1169b32 | I.8 | 1099a7–29 | Introduction |
| <i>kat’ archas</i> | | | | | |
| 8 | II.2 | 1149b27 | I.3 | | Introduction |
| 9 | VII.6 | 1149b27 | VII.1 | | Treatise “On Self-Control” |
| <i>en tois prōtois</i> | | | | | |
| 10 | IV.4 | 1125b2 | II.7 | 1107b24–1108a2 | Treatise “On Virtue” |
| 11 | IV.4 | 1125b13 | II.7 | 1107b33–1108a1 | Treatise “On Virtue” |
| 12 | VII.10 | 1152a13 | VI.12–13 | 1144a11–b32 | — |

Notes: ^a The Bekker number is given in the column only when the referent is clearly a particular claim, found on an identifiable line.

^b Specifically, this refers to the demarcation of three forms of friendship, which is the first important thesis in the treatise “On Friendship.”

These back-references are usefully contrasted, in their distinctive use, with the frequent and more general references in the *N.E.* to “what was said earlier.” These more general references typically employ the comparative term, *proteron*, “before” or “prior,” in relation to which *en tois prōtois* (“at the earliest”, “at first”) would be the superlative, and they are used to refer back to any earlier text, sometimes even to a passage in the same chapter as the reference, as for example: III.8, 1116a27 (referring back to the preceding chapter); v.5, 1133a26 (referring back only five lines, to 1133a20); and v.6, 1134a24 (referring back to the preceding chapter).¹⁷

wisdom), and therefore needs to be dealt with as a follow-up to a consideration of that virtue. The deep incompatibility is a worry of one of the aporiai of VII, stated at 1145b17–19.

¹⁷ And yet even *proteron* apparently gets used by Aristotle when he has in mind something that is found at the beginning of a discussion, and which would be more precisely indicated by *toen tois prōtois*. See for instance VI.1, 1139a3–5, referring back to I.13 (the start of “On Virtue”); x.6, 1176b1–2, referring back to I.7 (the “Introduction”); and x.6, 1177a10–11, also referring back to I.7.

2 THE OVERALL PLAN OF THE *N.E.*

One might distinguish the “general problem of unity” of the *N.E.* from specific problems. The general problem is whether and how the five treatises we have distinguished are tied together to form a coherent whole and, especially, whether they are united in more than as a kind of incidental assemblage. There are in contrast three specific problems of unity. One of these we have already noted, namely, the difficulty of whether the two treatments of pleasure harmonize with each other and with the whole of the *N.E.* The second is whether the account of happiness in Book I harmonizes with the account given in Book X – for it has seemed to many commentators that Book I identifies happiness with activity in accordance with all of the virtues, whereas Book X identifies it with the activity of only one virtue (the “theoretical” or contemplative activity distinctive of the intellectual virtue of *sophia*, “wisdom”).

The third involves the integration within the whole of Books V, VI, and VII, which are sometimes called the “Common Books,” because in several manuscript traditions they are shared by the *Eudemian Ethics* (*E.E.*) as well. (The *E.E.* is one of three ethical treatises traditionally ascribed to Aristotle; the other is the *Magna Moralia*. The *E.E.* follows the same general plan as the *N.E.*, but it differs somewhat in style, method, approach, and perhaps at points even in doctrine.¹⁸) The question arises, then, of whether the Common Books were composed originally for the *N.E.* or for the *E.E.*, and there are three possibilities. (1) If the Common Books were composed originally for the *N.E.*, then there is no special problem of integration. (2) If they were composed originally for the *E.E.*, and the *E.E.* was written before the *N.E.*, as most scholars hold, then one may wonder whether the Common Books were nonetheless edited or revised in such a way as to be specially adapted to the *N.E.* (3) If they were composed originally for the *E.E.*, and the *E.E.* was written after the *N.E.*, as Anthony Kenny has argued,¹⁹ then the Common Books could not possibly be specially adapted to the *N.E.*, and they presumably would not be integrated with it, except in very a general way. Clearly, any evidence that the Common Books are well integrated into the *N.E.* counts against the supposition underlying (3), and any evidence that they are not counts against the supposition underlying (1).

¹⁸ See Pakaluk (1998). Note that the fact that the *E.E.* follows the same general plan of the *N.E.* is itself an argument that the *N.E.* is unified by a coherent plan. Nothing can be repeated, with variations, unless it follows a similar underlying plan.

¹⁹ See Kenny (1978).

As regards the general problem of unity, we have already seen two ways in which the treatises of the *N.E.* are bound together, that is by editorial comments which bind these treatises together through reference to them, and by the *N.E.*'s periodic appeal to the standpoint of "sound governance" (*politikē*) as justifying the choice of topics for the *N.E.* The first is relatively superficial, conferring a unity admittedly not much greater than that possessed by the members of a list; the second is deeper, and more like the account of unity that one would want, because it gives a principled basis for linking the topics of happiness, virtue, friendship, and pleasure together. But can an even more satisfactory basis of unity be identified?

The following approach seems to have some merit. Let us consider that treatise within the *N.E.* which is the longest and most involved, and see if it is possible to identify for that treatise some principle of unity, or overarching plan, which Aristotle employs for his exposition in that case, and then let us see if the same principle or plan, or something similar, can be extended to cover the *N.E.* in its entirety. That is, let us see whether there is a coherence of the whole resembling the coherence of its lengthiest and most important part.

The longest treatise in the *N.E.* is "On Virtue," which occupies half the bulk of the work, from 1.13 through the end of VI. Now the principle which guides the development of this treatise is implicit at the start, in 1.13. Aristotle begins the exposition of that chapter, as we saw in two quotations above, by setting down the preliminary idea that, since happiness is defined as activity in accordance with virtue, then, to determine what happiness is, and how to achieve it, virtue needs to be investigated more thoroughly. And yet how is this investigation of virtue to proceed? How, after all, do we get a handle on virtue and discuss it more carefully? More fundamentally: is virtue a single thing, or are there several virtues, and, if there are several virtues, how are they to be identified; also, how can we be sure that one's identification of the virtues is complete?

It is sometimes said that Aristotle picks out the virtues by attending to "what people say" or commonly think (the so-called *endoxa*), and that his account of the virtues is conventional and even conservative as a result. However, Aristotle does not proceed at this point in that way; he does not canvass ordinary opinion or the views of prior philosophers such as Plato.²⁰ Rather, his procedure is to distinguish parts of the soul, on the

²⁰ A point made perceptively by Dorothea Frede in an unpublished paper, "Aristotle's Swarm of Virtues."

supposition that, if happiness is, more precisely, an activity of *the soul* in accordance with virtue (see the marked emphasis at I.13, 1102a13–17), then distinctions in virtue may be marked out corresponding to distinctions among parts of the soul.

The first such distinction he draws, and which he presents in I.13, is that between “the part of the soul possessing *logos*” and “the *alogon* part of the soul” (see *De Anima* 432a26).²¹ This yields the distinction between “*dianoetic* virtues” and “character virtues.” *Dianoetic* virtues are sometimes called “intellectual virtues,” a phrase which we easily understand in the sense of “virtues of thought” or “virtues of thinking,” and yet Aristotle’s meaning is rather that these are *virtues of the dianoetic part of the soul* (the part possessing *logos*). Similarly, the phrase “virtues of character” tends to obscure Aristotle’s meaning – although Aristotle is sensitive to a similar difficulty in Greek, and therefore he gives a defense of the use of the corresponding term (II.1, 1103a16–18). Rather, “virtues of character” are more precisely “virtues of the striving part of the soul” – the part of the soul which does not merely think (and thinking, he says, cannot move anything, VI.2, 1139a34–35), but which is capable of moving us to action because it strives after things – which Aristotle refers to as “the part which is such as to have sense-desire and is such as generally to strive” (I.13, 1102b30).

The supposition implicit in I.13, then, minimally depends on the distinction between a part and a whole, and amounts to the view that “the” virtue of a *whole* can be discerned only through discerning the virtues of its *parts*. But, more plausibly, Aristotle is supposing a richer, teleological perspective, namely, that when something is a “system” (*sustēma*, see IX.8, 1168b32) – that is, if it has articulated structure and parts hierarchically arranged – then “the” virtue of the system should be discerned by first discerning the operation of the parts, when each part has its proper virtue.²² The purpose of the treatise “On Virtue”, then, would be to identify the various virtues of the soul, through an identification of the parts of the soul, with a view to discerning how the parts operate in relation to one another, given that each has its proper virtue.

²¹ Understand the *alogon* simply as the part which does not possess *logos* in the way the part possessing *logos* does. It is potentially misleading to refer to this as “non-rational,” and certainly as “irrational,” since Aristotle holds that this part shares, nonetheless, in *logos*: I.13, 1102b13–14, 25–26, 1103a1–3. This point is highly important, since Aristotle regards “wishing,” or “the capacity to wish” (*boulēsis*), as belonging to the *orektikon*. It is therefore what is called the *alogon* part in I.13, and yet wishing is evidently neither non-rational nor irrational.

²² Or “virtues,” since, as we shall see, it is possible that a part has more than one virtue.

That this is the plan for the treatise is clear from its two other explicit remarks on classification. At VI.2, after the discussion of the virtues of character and at the start of the discussion of the dianoetic virtues, Aristotle says that the discussion must first consider the soul (1139a2–3). Just as, earlier, a distinction was drawn between two parts of the soul, that possessing *logos* and that not possessing it, so here a distinction is to be drawn in the part that possesses *logos*, namely, between (i) that part by which we consider things the principles of which do not admit of being otherwise, and (ii) that part by which we consider things the principles of which do admit of being otherwise. Aristotle gives these parts the names *epistēmonikon* and *logistikon* respectively. Importantly, these are names constructed with the *-ikon* ending, which is a typical device in Aristotelian psychology for the identification of a faculty, and which has the meaning “that which is such as to” – so that to identify something as “the Φ -*ikon* part” is to say that it is “that faculty which is such as to Φ .” The names are curious because they do not figure in the exposition that follows and are in some ways at odds with it: the *epistēmonikon* is, literally, “that faculty which is such as to know,” and yet Aristotle attributes three virtues to it, only one of which is referred to as *epistēmē* (the other two being *nous* and *sophia*); and the *logistikon* is “that which is such as to reckon,” which Aristotle immediately glosses as “that which is such as to deliberate” (1139a12–14). But, again, Aristotle later attributes two virtues to this part, only one of which (*phronēsis*, not *technē*) is distinctive for its deliberative activity. It would seem that the conferring of the names is to be explained, then, simply by Aristotle’s concern to have labels to mark out these newly identified parts – which testifies to the significance of this procedure for him.²³

If there are two parts of the part of the soul that possess *logos*, then why are there not only two dianoetic virtues, rather than the five that Aristotle lists (VI.3, 1139b16–17)? In a sense, there *are* only two: at least, it eventually becomes clear in the course of Book VI that *sophia* and *phronēsis* are the two main dianoetic virtues for Aristotle.²⁴

²³ Another reason is perhaps his concern that his identification of parts of the soul be based on nothing esoteric or technical, but rather on a view that he regards as roughly settled and basically correct. In line with his appeal to “published discussions” (*exoterikoi logoi*) at I.13, 1102a26–27 is the established use of *to logistikon* – no doubt following Plato – for the thinking part of the soul (Aristotle’s innovation in *N.E.* VI.2 being the separating out of the *epistēmonikon* from the *logistikon*): see *De Anima* 432a25 and *M.M.* I.4.8.3.

²⁴ Note that this conclusion is reached through teleological considerations: making is for doing, and thus the virtue of making (*technē*) is subordinated to the virtue for doing (*phronēsis*); science is for understanding, and thus virtues relevant to any kind of scientific understanding (*nous*, *epistēmē*) are subordinated to the virtue by which we understand what is most fundamental (*sophia*).

Yet Aristotle seems prepared to assign more than one virtue to a part of the soul in cases in which different states are required for it to achieve its proper work: “the virtues of these two parts will be those states by which each arrives at the truth” (1139b12–13). And in Book VI, at least, he seems to suppose that different states are necessary if, roughly, there is a difference in kind among its objects.²⁵ Because, in things the first principles of which admit of being otherwise, there is a difference in kind between a principle of doing and a principle of making, the virtue for attaining practical truth is different from the virtue for possessing a true account guiding the maker of a product. (This is admittedly not easy to understand, and yet clearly it is his way of thinking about the matter – which is the reason why VI.4 is devoted almost entirely to emphasizing the difference in kind between making, *poiēsis*, and doing, *praxis*.²⁶) His reasoning is less explicit for the virtues of the *epistēmonikon*, but it seems to follow a similar course: because, in things the first principles of which do not admit of being otherwise, there is a difference in kind between a cause and an effect (and, similarly, a difference in kind between ultimate causes and derivative causes), there are then separate virtues, respectively, for grasping true axioms (*nous*), deducing true theorems (*epistēmē*), and achieving true insight into ultimate causes (*sophia*).

Aristotle’s identification of the virtues of the striving part of the soul (*to orektikon*) seems, in a similar way, to depend importantly upon prior distinctions drawn among parts of that part of the soul; yet those distinctions are not drawn explicitly, before his investigation of the separate virtues of character: rather, Aristotle apparently thinks the basis of identification of the virtues will come to light after the fact and through that investigation itself: “Resuming our consideration of each virtue, let us say what they are, and what they are about, and in what way they are about these things; at the same time it will become clear also how many virtues there are” (III.5, 1115a4–6). Because Aristotle presents his own procedure in this way, it is no objection to the claim that virtues are differentiated by parts that he relies only implicitly on views about parts of the soul.

Indeed, it is *after* his discussion of courage and moderation that he remarks: “these are thought to be the virtues of the *alogon* parts of the soul” (III.10, 1117b23–24). This assertion, as it stands, is ambiguous and

²⁵ This seems to be on the principle, stated explicitly in the *De Anima*, that a power is specified by its activity, which in turn is specified by its object, so that differences in kind among objects imply differences in kind among powers.

²⁶ Presumably “different” (*heteron*) means there “different in kind,” and the word is used repeatedly: 1140a2, 4, 16.

could mean either: “These are reputed to be the virtues of the *alogon* parts of the soul (but I disagree),” or “These seem to be the virtues of the *alogon* parts of the soul (and I agree).” However, that the latter gives the correct meaning is an implication of a remark in III.2, where Aristotle states that “Those who say that choice [*prohairesis*] is sense-desire [*epithumia*] or spirit [*thumos*] or wish [*boulēsis*] or a certain kind of belief [*doxa*] do not seem to be right in what they say, since choice is not something that we have in common with *alogon* animals, yet sense-desire and spirit are” (IIIb10–13). Presumably, then, that in us which is such that it issues in sense-desires, and that in us which is such that it issues in spirited reactions – sometimes referred to by Aristotle as the *epithumetikon* and *thumikon* parts of the soul respectively (see *De Anima* 432a25, 433b4) – would be *alogon* parts, in the sense that they are functions shared by *alogon* animals; that is, in those animals for which something responsible for these functions exists, and yet in which the part possessing *logos* does not exist.²⁷ But moderation and courage are clearly virtues of these parts respectively.

As if to bring home this point, in his discussion of each of these virtues (and in the case of these two virtues alone), Aristotle is concerned to make comparisons, and draw appropriate contrasts, between how these virtues are manifested in us, and the related behavior in animals. Aristotle explicitly contrasts courage with the rage found in animals (III.8, III6b23–III7a9), going so far as to say that that sort of reaction would be the same as is found in courage, if only choice (*prohairesis*) were added as well (III7a5) – choice being precisely what was said in III.2 not to be in common with animals.²⁸ Again, in his discussion of the precise class of pleasures which the virtue of moderation deals with – namely, those of touch – Aristotle takes pains to say that these are the sensations most widespread among animals, and that the pleasures of a self-indulgent man are rightly reproached, because “it is not in the respect in which we

²⁷ That Aristotle’s identification of parts of the soul in *De Anima* is intrinsically related to taxonomic claims, linking human beings who have these parts to various classes of animals in which these parts are found independently and in isolation, is nicely argued for in a recent paper by Victor Caston, “Aristotle on the Unity of Psychology: How to Divide the Soul” (unpublished manuscript). Thus, a crucial reason for Aristotle’s separating out a nutritive part of the soul (*threptikon*) is that plants display that function only, without other functions. Similarly, a crucial reason for separating out parts responsible for sense-desire and spirit is that animals display these functions (some types only one, others both), whereas we do not.

²⁸ Note too the contrast between *to logistikon* and *to thumikon* implicit in Aristotle’s remark, somewhat surprising in the context, that courageous-seeming action may more reliably be attributed to a character trait when the threat springs up suddenly – something seen in advance, he says, might be dealt with through calculation and reason (*ek logismou kai logou*, III7a20–21).

are human that they belong to us, but in the respect in which we are animals" (III.10, 1118b1–3). This is not, in Aristotle's eyes, a moralistic remark, but rather a fairly precise comment based on what he thinks is a sound appreciation of human psychology.

If courage and moderation are virtues of the *alogon* parts of the soul, and virtues of character are distinguished from dianoetic virtues precisely on account of the former pertaining to the *alogon* part of the soul, would it not follow that there are no other virtues of character besides these two? If so, then either Books IV and V, which putatively deal with other virtues of character, are mistaken or misplaced, or it is simply false that, as I have been arguing, the organizing plan of the treatise "On Virtue" is that virtues should be distinguished, enumerated, and recognized as complete, based on distinctions drawn in parts of the soul. A simple reply would be to say that the reading of the text at 1117b24 that gives rise to the puzzle should be changed. An authoritative manuscript (K^b) omits the definite article and reads, simply, "these seem to be *virtues* of the *alogon* parts of the soul" – leaving it open that there are other such virtues. However, that reading makes little inherent sense: why would it follow, then, as the passage claims, that moderation should be considered after courage, if moderation were only one of many other virtues of the *alogon* parts of the soul? Therefore it seems likely that reading represents a change introduced by a scribe who felt the same difficulty that we are feeling: *lectio difficilior potior*.

Rather, it seems better to say that a distinction should be drawn, as it were, between "the *alogon* parts of the soul" and "parts of the *alogon* part of the soul"; that is, between a "part" in a stronger sense, and a "part" in some weaker sense. A part in the stronger sense would be that which is both responsible for a function and, additionally, found on its own in some other class of living thing: such are the *threptikon* (or *phutikon*), *epithumetikon*, *thumikon*, and also, presumably, the part which possesses reason (*to logon echon*).²⁹ A part in the weaker sense would include, at least, parts identified through some difference in kind among the activities of a part in the stronger sense – in the way that, as we have seen, Aristotle distinguishes the *epistēmonikon* from the *logistikon* – as well as perhaps parts identified in some weaker sense still. The only two relevant parts of the soul in the stronger sense would seem to be the *epithumetikon*

²⁹ This last part, Aristotle thinks, or some aspect of it (see *De Anima* 111.4–5), is similar in its function, or the same as, the kind of life found among the gods – which supposition, indeed, serves as the basis for several arguments in X.6–8, especially 1177b26–1178a8.

and *thumikon*, because these exhaust the types of *orexis* found in other animals, and this would explain Aristotle's remark.³⁰

Note that Aristotle's evident need to eliminate the *threptikon*, as not having any virtues relevant to his inquiry – his almost belabored treatment of that aspect of us – is inexplicable except on the assumption that he groups it along with the *epithumetikon* and *thumikon*, which in contrast he does wish to include (see I.13, 1102a13–15, a32–b12). Indeed, one might suppose that it is through an implicit contrast with the *threptikon* that one may properly understand a much-discussed line in I.13, which we have already had occasion to refer to:

The vegetative part [i.e., the *phutikon*] in no way shares in *logos*. But the sense-desiring part (the *epithumetikon*) – and the striving part in general (the *orektikon*) – does somehow share in it, in the respect in which it is such as to attend to it and is such as to submit to it. (1102b29–31)

I have rendered this text so as to convey two important aspects of the sense of the passage. First, the language of “is such as to” brings out the force of Aristotle's *-ikon* endings, because he wants to claim that the *alogon* part is *so constituted as to* do this. But, also, I have taken care to set off with dashes the phrase, “and the striving part in general.” The reason is that from the context, and given the immediate contrast with the vegetative part, the first claim that Aristotle wants to make here is something like: “rise up in the hierarchy of living things from plant life, to life marked by sense-desire – that is, even the lowest type of animal life – and immediately one finds something which can be so constituted as to attend to *logos* and obey it, and which, therefore, in human beings, can be the subject of virtues relevant to our inquiry.” Yet he wishes to make it clear that it is not because that type of life involves *epithumia* in particular, but rather because it is an instance of *orexis*, that it is capable of being so constituted, and so he adds the qualification set off by dashes.³¹

If this is so, then the *alogon* part of the soul includes not simply the *alogon* parts, but also parts in some weaker sense corresponding to the principal types of human striving or *orexis*. However, in that case it seems possible to account for the remaining virtues distinguished by Aristotle

³⁰ At VII.6, Aristotle refers to *epithumia* and *thumos* as types of “natural *orexis*.”

³¹ When it comes after an instance, or at the end of a list of instances, inviting an induction, the idiom “and generally” (*kai holōs*) in Aristotle has the function of indicating that the particular case falls within a general class, and that what is claimed of the particular is true of it because of its belonging in that general class. Examples of this usage in the *N.E.* alone include: 1097a27, b26, b31, 1101b14, and 1158b12. At *De Anima* 411a28 one finds: “desiring with sense-desire, wishing, and generally conation” (*kai holōs hai orexeis*).

in Books IV and V, or at least to do so roughly and in outline. As mentioned, Aristotle regards wishing (*boulēsis*, to *boulesthai*) as a species of *orexis* (see *De Anima* 414b2). He also regards wealth, honor, and friends as the principal external goods, the main kinds of things that we can want (see 1117b23–30, 1169b10, 1179a2–8).³² These goods presumably differ in kind, and therefore would imply differences in kind in *orexis*. Thus, Book IV would deal with the virtues of the parts of the *orektikon* consisting of our striving to have or to keep wealth (IV.1–2), honor (IV.3–4), and companions (IV.6–8) respectively. Although, as mentioned, this principle of division is implicit, Aristotle reveals his hand on a few occasions, as when he refers to the unnamed virtue dealing with honor, and the virtue of magnanimity, as governing *orexis* for honor (1107b27, 1125b7). Similarly, liberality governs a striving which, when not governed by the virtue, is referred to as “love of money” (1121b15). And perhaps it is not too much to understand Aristotle’s account of something like a natural desire for companionship (VIII.1, 1155a16–22) as referring to the *orexis* with which the homiletic virtues are concerned.³³

Book V, which deals with justice, would present something of a different case. Justice is defined as a settled disposition to wish in a certain way (V.1, 1129a8–9, 1129b4); yet, as Aristotle tells us, it takes as its object not goods conceived of as possessed or potentially acquired by us, but rather goods in general (1129b5) as equitably – and, indeed, *equally* – shared as between oneself and another: which is why justice is *pros heteron*, “in relation to someone else” (1130b1). So the part of the soul, in the weaker sense of “part,” that justice would presumably be the virtue of, would be our capacity for wishing for these goods insofar as we conceive ourselves as related to others conceived of as equals.³⁴ Note that Aristotle distinguishes this virtue from something else with which it is easily confused (“lawfulness”), by saying that the former is only a part of virtue, whereas the latter is the whole of virtue (1130a9). Admittedly his favored idioms for the former are “justice [as consisting] in part of virtue as a whole” (1130a14, 23, 33), and “particular justice” (1130a16, b30), and yet it is perhaps noteworthy that he easily elides these into “the justice in a part” (1130b16).

³² *M.M.* 2.6.21.4 lists “wealth, authority, honor, friends, reputation.”

³³ See IX.9, 1169b20, where friends are referred to as “natural goods,” and also the account beginning at 1170a13, which perhaps is best understood as aiming to explain why a love for companionship follows directly from our nature.

³⁴ Elsewhere Aristotle refers to what seems to be the same capacity as that of “sharing in law and contractual agreements” (VIII.11, 1161b6–7).

Thus, the plan underlying the treatise “On Virtue” would rest on the notion that the virtue of a “system” is or involves the virtue of its parts. The virtues would in outline be identified, on this plan, as in the diagram below (for the purposes of which we ignore Aristotle’s reasons for such things as the presumably formal difference between dealing with wealth or honor on a large scale – the object of magnificence and magnanimity – and doing so on a small scale – the object of liberality and an unnamed virtue concerning honor). The completeness of the division would follow from the twin facts that every part in the strong sense (which admits of separate existence among other living things) is accounted for, and also that every part in the weaker sense has as a distinct object some main good (or, as in the special case of justice, some main good conceived of in a distinctive way).

The *alogon* (or *orektikon*) part

The *alogon* parts

The *thumikon*

(natural *orexis* to avoid sense-pain) – COURAGE

The *epistēmonikon*

(natural *orexis* for sense-pleasure) – MODERATION

The parts of the *alogon* part

orexis for wealth – LIBERALITY and MAGNIFICENCE

orexis for honor – MAGNANIMITY and PROPER AMBITION

orexis for companionship – THE THREE “HOMILETIC” VIRTUES

orexis for goods in general in relation to others – JUSTICE

The part possessing *logon*

The *epistēmonikon* – NOUS, EPISTEMĒ, SOPHIA

The *logistikon* – TECHNĒ, PHRONĒSIS

This plan would account for the unity of I.13 through VI of the *N.E.*, at least at a high level of organization, and on the presumption, too, that the treatments of the particular virtues are reasonably adapted to this plan.³⁵

Now, the original suggestion was to see whether a like plan could be extended, or somehow be seen to apply to the *N.E.* in its entirety, and it is to this question that I now turn. This would be equivalent to the question of whether Aristotle relies upon the device of referring to “parts” of the soul elsewhere, either for introducing the other main discussions of the *N.E.* or for guiding those discussions towards their intended conclusions. And it seems as though he does, in two clear cases at least.

³⁵ Of course, we are also putting aside for the moment difficulties that might be thought to arise from the three particular problems mentioned about the unity of the *N.E.*

Consider first the treatise “On Friendship.” We saw that Aristotle justified his inclusion of such a discussion in the *N.E.* on the grounds that friendship was a virtue or involved virtue. If the supposition that a distinction in virtue needs to be correlated with a distinction in parts of the soul is in force, too, in this treatise, we should expect at some point to see Aristotle referring the quasi-virtue of friendship to a part of the soul. Admittedly he does not assert that there is a part of the soul the virtue of which is friendship. However, he does take pains to argue that friendship should be construed as the extension to others of an individual’s self-love (IX.4, 1166a1–11), and self-love he construes as the relation of one part of the soul to itself: a habitual reflexive relation of the part of the soul which takes thought (*to noun*) to itself (IX.4, 1166a22–23, IX.4, 1168b35). Since Aristotle contrasts this part with the *alogon* part of the soul (IX.8, 1168b20), it seems safe to say that his intent is to assign friendship to the “part possessing *logos*” previously identified in 1.13,³⁶ although he assigns it to this part not (so to speak) considered on its own, but rather in its relationship to itself. So, the important treatise “On Friendship” seems to carry through in its own terms Aristotle’s original intention to discuss happiness and the virtues through an examination of the parts of the soul in their good functioning.³⁷

The second clear reliance in the *N.E.* on the device of “parts” of the soul is in the treatise “On Happiness.” After he has surveyed the entire “system” of the soul, by looking at its parts in their various relations as possessing the virtues proper to them, Aristotle turns in x.7 to determining the question of which of the activities he has considered counts as happiness (*eudaimonia*). The first and apparently principal consideration he raises is that happiness would be the activity of the “the best part” of the soul: “If happiness is an activity in accordance with virtue, it would reasonably be the best activity, which would be the activity of the best part” (1177a12).³⁸ Clearly, he would not consider himself able even to raise the question “Which virtue’s activity is that of the best part?” unless all along

³⁶ Consider Aristotle’s claim that the person who shows the bad sort of self-love (and who does not love the part of the soul which takes thought, *to noun*), gratifies instead “his sense-desires and his passions in general and his *alogon* part of the soul” (1168b19–20), and how this claim bears a striking similarity to his description of the *alogon* part in 1.13. The two phrases are: *tais epithumiais kai holōs tois pathesi kai tōi alogōi*, versus *to d’epithumetikon kai holōs orektikon*. The parallelism suggests, too, that Aristotle understands a *pathos* as inherently related to an *orexis*: that a *pathos* just is some way in which we are affected in virtue of our having an *orexis*.

³⁷ This now brings together almost four-fifths of the content of the *N.E.*

³⁸ That it is the principal consideration is shown by his describing the other considerations he next introduces as merely “agreeing” with this conclusion (*homologoumenon*, 1177a18–19).

he had been taking virtues to be virtues of parts. Again, that an activity relevant to the question of happiness is the activity of a part as having its proper virtue implies that, as mentioned earlier, he has been examining parts of the soul with a view to their good functioning, which is exhibited when each has its proper virtue. Finally, that Aristotle so naturally concludes that the activity of the best part would be happiness shows – what we have seen much evidence for already – that he is thinking of the parts of the soul as hierarchically arranged into a “system,” since in that case an activity becomes “most final” and “best,” because it is the activity of what the entire system of the soul is for. That is to say, Aristotle takes the criterion of 1.7, that happiness is “activity of the soul in accordance with virtue, and, if the virtues are several, in accordance with the best and most final” (1098a16–18), to be unproblematically satisfied by the activity of the best part, because he has been taking the soul to be a “system.” In such a way, virtuous activities become more or less “final” in relation to one another, and thus more or less good, precisely to the extent that they are assigned to parts which are higher or lower in the hierarchy.

3 PARTICULAR PROBLEMS OF UNITY IN THE *N.E.*

What has just been said suffices to show that Books 1 and x do harmonize with each other, in the sense that there is a conception of the plan of the *N.E.* – which, it has been maintained, is Aristotle’s own – on which there would be no conflict between them. The difficulty needs to be stated correctly for it to be resolved. The difficulty is not: Book 1 says that happiness is one thing and Book x says that it is something else. Book 1, as we have said, gives only a definition of happiness, and Book x identifies something as meeting this definition. The difficulty, therefore, is to explain how the activity picked out in Book x as happiness might reasonably be understood by Aristotle as satisfying the Book 1 definition. The resolution of the difficulty – that is, the conception apparently directing the *N.E.* as a whole – involves the conception of the soul as a hierarchically ordered “system.”

Aristotle holds that generally the good has the nature of a goal,³⁹ or “that for the sake of which” other things exist; thus the chief good would be at some kind of pinnacle of subordinate goals. Now we tend to conceive of this in terms of an ordering of actions and intentions: an agent chooses this in order to do that, etc. And yet, despite a brief passage in which

³⁹ See White (1989).

Aristotle dialectically seems to reason in a similar way (II.2, 1094b18–22), his typical tendency is rather to think of the chief good in relation to some kind of stable structure – as, for example, at the beginning of the ethics, that which is the aim of the highest practical discipline (the *N.E.* I.1–2), and, at the end, that which is the actualization and achievement of the best part of the human soul.⁴⁰ Indeed, it would seem that for Aristotle, our ordering of choices would be good only if they could be justified by appeal to such a structure.

The difficulty in seeing how the activity picked out in Book x satisfies the definition given in Book I results from the apparent reduction or restriction in scope, from many activities to one: the Book I definition at first looks as if it should yield the result that all virtuous activities are ultimate goods, yet Book x picks out only one such activity. However, what in Aristotle's eyes justifies the transition from the one to the other is evidently his conception of the soul as a "system." He thinks that for a "system" the whole is reasonably identified with its chief part, and presumably too, then, the virtue and activity of the whole, with that of the chief part. He says this very clearly in several places, and offers it explicitly as his reason for identifying happiness with the activity of *sophia*:

Just as, indeed, a city-state seems to be most of all its most authoritative part, and every other system as well, so also a human being. (IX.8, 1168b31–33)

It would seem that each of us either is, or is most all, his thinking part. (IX.4, 1166a22–23)

Rather than follow those who advise us to set our minds on human things, as we are human, and on mortal things, as we are mortal, we ought rather as much as possible to make ourselves immortal, and do everything for the sake of living by that which is the best part, among all the parts in us – since, even if this is slight in bulk, in its power and dignity it is far superior to all of those. And each of us would seem to be just this part, if indeed it is that which is authoritative and better [than the others]. (IX.7, 1177b31–1178a3)

Whether Aristotle's view is coherent, and whether his conclusion follows from his presuppositions, may of course be debated; but there can be no question that the above passages provide the rationale for the conclusion drawn in Book x, and thus – when the problem is viewed correctly – no serious difficulty about the *unity* of Books I and x.

Another particular problem of unity, as we said, concerns the two discussions of pleasure in *N.E.* – do they contain conflicting accounts, and

⁴⁰ Other "structural" ways of picking out this good are: that which is the single aim of striving of every living thing (x.2, 1172b12–15); and that which is possessed by the gods (x.8, 1178b7–32).

why is each apparently written with no cognizance of the other? One might wonder, first, whether approaching the difficulty from the perspective of Aristotle's appeal elsewhere in the *N.E.* to parts of the soul can shed any light. A solution which suggests itself is that VII.10–14 deals with pleasures assignable to the *alogon* part, and X.1–5 deals with pleasures of the part which possesses *logos*. This gets some support by the former's being especially concerned with "somatic" pleasures (see VII.14), which in III.10 are explicitly identified as the sort of pleasure dealt with by the virtue of moderation (III.7b23–III.8a1), and which virtue, as we have seen, is a virtue of an *alogon* part of the soul. In contrast, the Book X discussion seems concerned solely with pleasures assignable to *dianoia* (see II.74b21; II.75a7, 14, 27; II.76a3).⁴¹

One might put the point in the following way. Given the prominence of the notion of parts of the soul in *N.E.*, and the importance, for the organization of the treatise, of the fundamental distinction between the part which possesses *logos* and the *alogon* part, one would suppose antecedently that the completeness of the treatise would require that there be *two* discussions of pleasure, corresponding to each of the parts: that is, it would hardly be surprising – nay, rather, it would be expected – that there be two treatments. If so, then the difficulty about unity potentially would reduce mainly to the question of why the two expected treatments are separated, that is, why they are placed where they are.

But then there would be natural and obvious answers to *this* question. Recall that pleasure is a topic that is introduced as if something to be included because of its relationship to other things, which are the main topics of the treatise, namely, the virtues and happiness. The location of the treatments, then, would presumably be governed by a consideration of that to which the pleasure of that part of the soul is most relevant. And then the solution would be: pleasures of the *alogon* part of the soul are discussed in relation to *akrasia* (VII.1–9), and pleasures of the part which possesses *logos* in relation to *theoria* (X.6–8). That, generally, the *alogon* part is at issue in the phenomenon of *akrasia* is, after all, affirmed by Aristotle in I.13, where he actually argues that there is an *alogon* part by reference to what is evident in cases of *akrasia* and *engkrateia* (II.02b14–25). Moreover, that *theoria* has a pleasure distinctive for its astonishing clarity, well-groundedness, and lack of perturbation,

⁴¹ Compare the mention of the pleasures of a "lover of learning" at II.75a14 with the remark at III.10, II.7b28–29 that pleasures that come from a love of learning are distinct in kind from somatic pleasures.

is the most important supplementary argument which Aristotle brings to bear in x.7.

Clearly, even on the hypothesis that the two treatments, and their placement, are broadly to be understood in this way, still, difficulties would remain, such as how serious a problem it is that the treatments do not refer to each other (contrast how vi.2 refers back to i.13), and why the Book vii treatment evidently deals with so much more than somatic pleasures.⁴² Nonetheless, if the hypothesis is correct, then it resolves fundamentally this particular problem of unity, because it points to an understanding of the *N.E.*, shared either by Aristotle or by an editor, according to which the two treatments of pleasure placed where we find them would in broad outline make good sense.⁴³

The third particular problem of unity mentioned above concerned whether the so-called Common Books, *N.E.* v, vi, vii, either originally belonged with the *N.E.* or are well adapted to the *N.E.* This problem could be dealt with by looking at differences in style and language of the *E.E.* and the *N.E.*, or by examining cross-references in the two treatises, or by a careful study of whether and how statements elsewhere in the *N.E.* presuppose material in the Common Books. Here we might wonder simply whether a consideration of the “plan” of the *N.E.*, as sketched above, sheds any particular light on the problem.

Although much can be said along these lines, I close with two observations, about how Book vi, and therefore the Common Books, seem to be inserted into the general plan of the *N.E.* – and in this respect they harmonize well with the rest of the *N.E.* First, vi.2 appears to refer back with a striking clarity and consistency of language to claims about parts of the soul which are first presented in i.13: “earlier it was said that there are two parts of the soul, the part which possesses *logos*, and the *alogon* part; now let the part possessing *logos* be divided in the same way” (1139a3–5). In contrast, the language of the *E.E.*, where the main parts of the soul are

⁴² An obvious answer to this question is that it must distinguish in order to limit what it eventually says to only one class of pleasures – while leaving it open that some other class of pleasures might later receive fuller treatment. Another is that Aristotle or the editor wishes to make use of the Book vii discussion, made pertinent mainly by the preceding discussion of *akrasia* and *engkrateia*, to introduce claims about pleasure that help advance the exposition of Books viii and ix on friendship. And indeed there are clear examples of this. For instance, the distinction between things good or pleasant in their own right (or *haplōs*), versus things good or pleasant only *for someone* (*tini*), is introduced in vii but crucially important for the division of friendship into three kinds.

⁴³ Clearly, too, to suggest that an interpretation is possible is not yet to show it correct; yet, even still, in light of the principle of charity a plausible way of dealing with an otherwise serious difficulty immediately acquires a great deal of weight.

introduced, is hardly as clear: these are first referred to as “the parts which share in *logos*” (1219b28), and the subordinate part is at first only indirectly and in passing referred to as *alogon* (b31; but then see later 1220a10, b31). Second, as we have seen, the conclusion of the *N.E.* x.7, that happiness is activity of the virtue of *sophia*, is conceived of by Aristotle as following from a view of the soul as a hierarchically organized “system,” and yet it is in Book vi primarily that Aristotle develops a teleological argument for *sophia*’s having this pride of place.

PART II

Happiness

*Living for the sake of an ultimate end**Susan Sauvé Meyer*

It is for the sake of happiness that we all do everything else we do.¹
(*E.N.* 1.12, 1102a2–3)

Aristotle claims that we do everything for the sake of happiness (*eudaimonia*). It is now well recognized that he does not mean by this that our actions are aimed at making us feel happy, satisfied, or otherwise pleased. “Happiness” (*eudaimonia*), for Aristotle, is a placeholder for “the ultimate end in life” – that which we desire for its own sake and for whose sake we pursue all our other objectives (*E.N.* 1.2, 1094a18–19; cf. 1.7, 1097a30–b6). The normative question of importance to Aristotle, as well as for the rest of Greek ethics, is not *whether* we should pursue happiness,² but rather *what* happiness consists in. Is it for the sake of pleasure, honor, virtue, contemplation, or something else that we should direct all our actions in life?

The answer to this normative question was disputed among the major philosophical schools in antiquity, and the precise nature of Aristotle’s own answer has been a matter of considerable controversy among his modern interpreters. Could he really be affirming, as he patently appears to in *E.N.* x.7–8, that the ultimate goal of life is to engage in theoretical contemplation (*theoria*)? Would not this “intellectualist” conception of the ultimate good imply that ethical activity (the exercise of the virtues of character) is for the sake of contemplation? And how could this be so? Aristotle’s extensive discussion of ethical activity shows no evidence that he takes it to be productive of contemplation, nor does it seem credible that he thinks our commitment to it should be contingent on its ability to yield this result.

¹ Translations here and elsewhere in this chapter are by Rowe in Aristotle (2002), occasionally slightly altered for consistency with my own terminology.

² The ancient Cyrenaics were an exception: see Annas (1993) p. 38n.41.

Such objections rest on a cluster of assumptions about what is involved in pursuing something as an ultimate end that have become the focus of scholarly debate in recent decades. Chief among them is the assumption that any action performed for the sake of an end must be a means to that end. J. L. Ackrill famously argued that this need not be the case, thereby inspiring a whole generation of interpretations (generally classified as “inclusivist”) according to which intrinsically desirable things are also “for the sake of happiness” – in the sense that they are constituents of happiness rather than means to it. Ethical activity and *theoria* are both constituents of happiness, he argued, without the former being pursued for the sake of the latter.³ The most sustained and influential rejoinder to Ackrill was from Richard Kraut, who insisted that for one thing to be “for the sake of” another, it must causally promote it. Ethical activity, on Kraut’s reading of Aristotle, is indeed for the sake of contemplation. (He avoids the unpalatable conclusion that we are enjoined to act unethically when this would improve our prospects for *theoria* by arguing that Aristotle does not think we are licensed to maximize our happiness.)⁴ In the most recent sustained defense of the intellectualist interpretation, Gabriel Richardson Lear has joined Kraut in criticizing Ackrill, but argues that the “for-the-sake-of” relation is wider than Kraut allows. Ethical activity, she proposes, is “for the sake” of *theoria* not in the sense that it causally promotes it, but rather in the sense that it is an approximation of it.⁵ My project here is to defend what I take to be Ackrill’s core insight about the “for-the-sake-of” relation against the objections articulated by Kraut and Richardson Lear, but I do so in the service of the intellectualist interpretation of Aristotle that he rejects. Ackrill’s core insight about the “for-the-sake-of” relation, I shall argue, comes apart from his inclusivism.⁶

I THE “FOR-THE-SAKE-OF” RELATION IN *E.N.* I

Aristotle’s interest in goal-directed behavior is evident from the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In its famous opening sentence, he claims that “every sort of expert knowledge, and every inquiry, and similarly every action and undertaking seems to seek some good” (*E.N.* I.1, 1094a1–2).

³ Ackrill (1980). ⁴ Kraut (1989). ⁵ Richardson Lear (2004).

⁶ The outline of the view for which I will here be arguing is presented without sustained defense in Meyer (2008), pp. 56–62. For helpful discussion of drafts of the present essay I am grateful to the Greater Philadelphia Ancient Philosophy Colloquium, to audiences at Kutztown University and the University of Richmond, and especially to Anna Cremaldi, Miriam McCormick, Jon Miller, Nancy Schaubert, Krisanna Scheiter, and John Simmons.

Moreover, he continues, individual instances of goal-directedness themselves tend to exist in nested hierarchies. The bridle maker produces bridles for the use of the cavalry and the blacksmith shoes for their horses; thus bridle making and horseshoe making are “for the sake of” (*charin*) fighting on horseback. The cavalry, in its turn, like the other branches of the military, is deployed by the general; hence its activity is for the sake of the general’s goal, victory in war (*E.N.* 1.1, 1094a9–16). Thus the various ends of the disciplines practiced by the bridle maker, the blacksmith, the cavalry rider, the hoplite, and the infantryman are all unified under the single goal of the general. The general’s goal is in turn subordinate to that of the statesman, who determines when and whether the city will pursue its objectives by military means. It is for the good of the citizens that the statesman directs the general’s craft, along with all the other disciplines practiced in the city. This latter goal, the human good, is the ultimate aim of all the activities in the well-regulated city (*E.N.* 1.2, 1094a27–b7). Thus the statesman’s regulation of the subordinate practices in a well-ordered city replicates, on the political scale, the unifying focus that the pursuit of happiness provides in the life of an individual person. We would therefore do well to keep the political paradigm in mind when endeavoring to understand what is involved in doing everything for the sake of an ultimate goal.

One important point that becomes clear from this perspective is that a pursuit’s being for the sake of an end is not simply a matter of its practitioner’s desiring that goal. If this were so, then bridle making would be for the sake of cavalry riding, and ultimately for the sake of winning wars, just in case individual bridle makers chose to undertake their craft out of a desire to support the cavalry and contribute to the war effort. But surely bridle making is for the sake of cavalry riding, in the way to which Aristotle here draws our attention, even if bridle makers choose their occupation without regard to the interests of the cavalry, the generals, or the city at large. Just as the soldiering can be “for the sake of” military strategy even if the army is populated by unenthusiastic conscripts (even pacifists), bridle making is no less for the sake of the cavalry when the trade is plied by slave labor secretly rooting for the cavalry’s defeat. The soldier and the bridle maker may perform their functions better and be more likely to advance the cause of the general if they are motivated by a desire for that goal, but such a motivation cannot be what makes it the case that bridle making is for cavalry riding and soldiering for winning battles.⁷

⁷ Richardson Lear (2004) has also pointed this out (pp. 13–14, 32–37).

What is it then about the relation between bridle making and cavalry riding that makes it the case that the former is for the sake of the latter, even if the practitioner of the former does not desire the latter? One might note, to begin with, that the product of the bridle maker is used by the cavalry rider, and thus causally contributes to the latter's activity. But causal contribution of this sort is clearly not enough,⁸ for making bridles also contributes to the death of hide animals, but it is not for the sake of killing animals any more than the blacksmith's fire is for the sake of the unhealthy air that it inevitably produces. Such antecedent or "efficient" causality is insufficient to ground a "for-the-sake-of" relation because the latter is an instance of teleological or "final" causality – in which a goal exerts causal influence on the processes directed toward it. When A is for the sake of B, A is in some sense *because of* B. So it must be in virtue of an *effect* that cavalry riding has on bridle making, or that horseshoe making has on the blacksmith's fire, that the latter are for the sake of the former. Here we might note that the blacksmith's fire is hot enough to soften iron *because* horseshoe making involves beating molten iron (whereas it does *not* produce soot *because* this makes the air unhealthy).

The sort of influence that the higher pursuit has on the lower pursuit that is practiced for its sake comes in two varieties.⁹ In the first, which I shall call normative governance, the higher practice supplies the norms that are internal to the lower one – as when the craft that uses a product supplies the norms that govern its production. For example, the nature of horseback riding determines the norms that govern bridle making, since a bridle is a device used by a rider to control a horse. Indeed, depending on the sort of riding, the norms for the bridle will be different – the show jumper and the cavalry rider will need different types of bridle. The nature of cavalry riding (which distinguishes it from show jumping, dressage, or herding) is itself informed by the use to which it is put by the general. So just as the bridle maker's goal is determined by the nature of the riding performed by the cavalry, the nature of that riding is determined by the military use to which it will be put. In a famous set of examples from Plato's *Statesman*, weaving (the enterprise of intertwining warp and woof) governs the subordinate practices of woof- and warp-spinning. It determines that the latter will produce strong threads suitable for providing strength and structure along the length of the fabric, while the

⁸ And I shall argue below that it may not even be necessary.

⁹ A point well developed by Richardson Lear (2004), pp. 17–19. Kraut, as far as I can tell, does not distinguish these two types of normative control.

former will produce softer threads suitable for intertwining with the latter to yield a supple fabric (*Stsm.* 282d–283b).

The second way in which a higher pursuit may govern a practice that is for its sake is to regulate when, whether, and to what extent the lower practice will be engaged in. For example the general decides when and where the cavalry will ride in battle. This kind of influence, which I shall call “regulation,” may be exercised regardless of whether the lower craft’s goal is a product (bridles) or an activity (fighting on horseback). It is displayed in tactical decisions (e.g., when and where to send in the cavalry) as well as strategic ones (how large a cavalry is to be trained, how many bridles to order, how much of a state’s resources to commit to a standing military) and in questions of policy (what are the moral limits on the conduct of warfare?). In contrast with the case of normative governance, the norms that regulate the subordinate practice are external to that practice. While it is not obvious that every superordinate craft in the political paradigm supplies the norms internal to the enterprises it controls (a point to which I will return), external regulation of the lower enterprise by the higher does seem to be essential to the subordinating relationship. Indeed, at least in some cases, the exercise of such regulation pretty much amounts to the exercise of the higher order craft: it is the general’s function *par excellence* to decide when to send in the cavalry, and the statesman’s whether to go to war.

Examining the relation between such regulatory activity and the activities of the regulated enterprises in certain paradigm cases will help to illuminate an important insight of Ackrill’s. This is that one activity may be for the sake of another activity of which it forms a part. Consider, for example, the relation between the battle directed by the general and the activities of the cavalry and infantry on the battlefield. The battle is not just the cavalry, the infantry, and the other participants each performing their respective functions – even though in a sense their activities exhaust the actions constituting the battle. We can see that this is so by considering why the battle is won or lost. It is not just because the cavalry fight on horseback and the infantry fight on the ground, but because the cavalry of a particular size and formation attacks when it does and where it does (all variables within the scope of the general’s not the cavalryman’s expertise), and similarly for the infantry. Thus the activity of the general is displayed in precisely these features of the cavalry’s and infantry’s activities. In this sense, the activities that constitute the battle (those of the cavalry and infantry) are *part of* the general’s activity. At the same time, they are for the sake of it, for Aristotle explicitly tells us that the goal of

the subordinate activity is “for the sake of” the superordinate activity’s goal (*E.N.* I.I, 1094a14–16). Thus we have here an example of a set of activities (the cavalry’s and the infantry’s) that are for the sake of another activity (the general’s) of which they are a constituent part.

Ackrill is therefore right to insist, on Aristotle’s behalf, that an activity may be composed of other activities that are performed for its sake. We can (and should) endorse this insight, even if we reserve judgment on the “inclusivist” interpretation that Ackrill sought to erect upon it. In a nutshell, that inclusivism consists of Ackrill’s further claim that Aristotle conceives of the ultimate goal in life as a composite end of which *theoria* and ethical actions are its constituents – neither pursued for the sake of the other and both pursued for the sake of happiness. Interpreters inspired by Ackrill expanded the list of the ultimate good’s constituents to include all things (not just activities)¹⁰ desirable for their own sakes – hence the label “inclusivism.” The common motivation for this class of interpretations was to avoid attributing to Aristotle a “monolithic” conception of our ultimate end: specifically, that everything we do in life is (or should be) for the sake of contemplation.

Partisans of the monolithic (or “intellectualist”) interpretation of Aristotle have rightly objected that an aggregate or compound of ends does not thereby constitute a further end for whose sake the original ends are pursued; a mere aggregate of ends does not have the focus and unity to be “endlike” in its own right, to exercise the normative or regulative control characteristic of genuine and paradigmatic examples of ends.¹¹ If two of my ends in life are growing a garden and raising a family, it does not follow that it is for the compound end of growing-a-garden-and-raising-a-family that I engage in the former two pursuits (even if it is true that the compound of the two ends is better than either individually).¹² A genuine end, we have seen, must structure or regulate the pursuit of subordinate goals.

¹⁰ Kraut rightly objects, against this version of inclusivism, that in the function argument Aristotle unambiguously and exclusively identifies the human good with excellent activity (no other “goods” are included in it; see Kraut [1989], p. 199). Ackrill, however, is not vulnerable to this objection, since the only constituents of the final good that he identifies are activities: *theoria* and ethical action. It is perhaps Ackrill’s examples (e.g., tomatoes and bacon being constituents of the best breakfast) that have led some to include other goods (e.g., health and honor) on the list of happiness’s constituents.

¹¹ Kraut (1989), pp. 8–9, 212; cf. Richardson Lear (2004), p. 42.

¹² As Ackrill (1980) points out of his version of the example: a breakfast of bacon and tomatoes is better than one of either separately (p. 21). Here we may see that Aristotle’s claim that the higher end is more choiceworthy than the subordinate ends (1094a14–15) is not true in the contra-positive.

This point must be conceded. Ackrill in fact acknowledges it as a legitimate constraint on any theory that ethical activity and *theoria* constitute the compound ultimate end of life; in his view Aristotle regrettably but understandably fails to identify the requisite principles structuring the pursuit of the compound end of ethical-activity-and-*theoria*.¹³ It is important to note, however, that Ackrill's central insight, articulated above, is not vulnerable to this objection. There are indeed (and Aristotle recognizes that there are) cases where the activities that constitute an end are regulated by its pursuit. The activity of the cavalry and of the infantry, which comprise the battle (or one side of it), are structured and regulated by the general's plan, which is realized in the battle itself. So too are the activities in Ackrill's own examples, golfing and having a good vacation. Whether, when, and how often to golf on one's vacation are, in the practice of the competent vacationer, regulated by her standards for vacationing well. The golfing vacationer, in making such decisions, is golfing as part of vacationing *and* in order to vacation well.¹⁴

Thus we may retain Ackrill's original insight about the "for-the-sake-of" relation. My aim in the rest of this essay is to show how that insight illuminates the kind of unity involved in a life structured around an ultimate goal while still allowing that *theoria* may be the ultimate goal of the best human life. I shall proceed in two stages. First I will consider the life structured by the demands of the ethical virtues – the life that Aristotle labels second best in *E.N.* x.8 (1178a9). Here Ackrill's insight has its primary application (and grounds what is most plausible in the inclusivist position). I shall then consider the relation between ethical activity and *theoria* in the life that Aristotle identifies as best. On the basis of lessons learned from reflecting on the ways in which one pursuit may be for the sake of another in the second-best life, I will explain how we can make sense of the proposal that, in the best life, ethical activity is itself "for the sake of" contemplation without thereby being committed to the implausible thesis that ethical activity is either a constituent of or a means to contemplation. The structure of a life organized around the pursuit of *theoria* is consistent with the pursuit of a wide range of activities valued for their own sakes, including an uncompromising commitment to ethical activity.

¹³ Ackrill (1980), pp. 31–33.

¹⁴ It is odd that Ackrill fails to use the examples that Aristotle himself provided in *E.N.* 1.1 – the very text on which he bases his interpretation.

II LIVING *TOU KALOU HENEKA*

The virtues of character, as Aristotle conceives them, regulate feelings and actions across the whole of a person's private, social, and political life. For example, temperance concerns our pursuit of bodily pleasures and health, and courage our concern for personal safety and our willingness to risk it in defense of our fellow citizens. Liberality and magnificence concern the pursuit, expenditure, and display of wealth in service of family, friends, and the common good. Magnanimity concerns the pursuit of honor, justice our financial transactions with others, and a whole host of interpersonal virtues concern the various ways we cooperate with, support, amuse, or are amused by others in social situations. Each virtue concerns the pursuit of an objective valued for its own sake (pleasure, life, wealth, or honor, for example), and regulates that pursuit in the light of a higher norm. For example, not all opportunities for gain are to be taken, nor is every opportunity for pleasure and honor. In the words of the doctrine of the mean, one must pursue these objectives neither too much nor too little, at the right time, to the right degree, in the right circumstances, and so on (*E.N.* II.6, 1106b18–23).

While Aristotle notoriously declines to specify criteria by which to determine when it is appropriate to pursue these objectives and when it is not, he does explicitly identify the norm in the light of which the virtuous person makes these discriminations. This is “the admirable” or “the fine” (*kalon*), whose opposite is the “shameful” or “ugly” (*aischron*) (*E.N.* III.7, 1115b13). Aristotle offers us no further analysis of this pair of notions, but it is clear that the basic competence of the ethically virtuous person is to opt for options that are *kalon* and eschew those that are *aischron* (*E.N.* IV.2, 1122b6–7). For example, the courageous person withstands life-threatening dangers only when it is *kalon* to do so or *aischron* not to (*E.N.* III.7, 1115a12–31, b23–24, 1116a10–15). The temperate person differs from the intemperate in that he declines to pursue opportunities for shameful bodily gratification (*E.N.* III.11, 1119a18). The “liberal” person will not seek or accept income from sources that are shameful (*E.N.* IV.1, 1121b1–2). The friendly person shares the pleasures of others as long as they are fine (*E.N.* IV.6, 1126b32). The appropriately witty person, unlike someone who will stop at nothing to get a laugh, has a standard of decency and avoids shameful jokes (or jokes that would be shameful to tell in the circumstances, 1128a4–7, 33–b1). The *kalon* thus functions as the goal (*telos*) of the virtuous person, whose characteristic motivation is to act “for the sake of the admirable” (*tou kalou heneka* – *E.N.* III.7, 1115b12–13; *E.E.* III.12, 1230a28–29).

We may note that in the life of ethical virtue, the relation between the virtuous person's pursuit of the *kalon* and his pursuit of such subordinate objectives as pleasure, honor, and wealth replicates the way in which the general's conduct of the battle structures the activities of the cavalry and the infantry while at the same time being constituted by them. The ethical life, as Aristotle conceives of it, involves the pursuit of a wide range of objectives – from the large and important (bodily pleasure, life and health, family security, personal honor, being agreeable to others) to the relatively less significant (making people laugh or entertaining them richly). In also pursuing them “for the sake of the *kalon*,” the ethical person is regulating his pursuit of them in the light of his unwavering commitment to doing what is *kalon* and avoiding what is *aischron*. His pursuit of the *kalon* as an end therefore structures and regulates his pursuit of these subordinate objectives, while at the same time being constituted by those pursuits. That is, the ethical life (one version of the happy life as Aristotle conceives it), consists of a wide range of different pursuits that are regulated by the requirements of ethical virtue. Thus Ackrill is right (about this version of the happy life at least) that activities for the sake of happiness may constitute the happy life.

This picture is what I take Irwin to have in mind when he responds to Kraut that happiness consists not of a mere aggregate of goods, but of a variety of goods structured by the requirement of virtue, and likewise Broadie, when she characterizes Aristotelian happiness as putting constraints on the pursuit of lower-order goods.¹⁵ Richardson Lear criticizes such conceptions of the goal of life on the ground that they fall short of satisfying Aristotle's conception of an ultimate end (that for the sake of which). Against Broadie's proposal that an ultimate goal may constrain but not determine the nature of subordinate pursuits, Richardson Lear charges that a constraint on the pursuit of an activity does not count as that activity's goal (2004, p. 38). However, we have just seen a clear counterexample to this principle in our discussion of the ethical person: Aristotle's own account of the ethical person's motivation makes it explicit that the *kalon* is both a constraint on her pursuits and her goal in performing them. Consider the activity Richardson Lear invokes as an example: giving a dinner party. How lavishly and how often one entertains, as well as how many guests one hosts, are all within the scope of the Aristotelian virtue of magnificence (*megalo-prepeia* – *E.N.* iv.2). The virtuous host avoids vulgar displays of wealth and the opposing extreme of

¹⁵ Irwin (1991), p. 389; Broadie (1991), pp. 31–32; both cited by Richardson Lear (2004), pp. 38, 42.

shabbiness (*mikroprepeia*). In so regulating the entertainments he offers, he is acting *tou kalou heneka* (1122b6–7). Thus the *kalon*, the norm that regulates his dinner party giving, is also his goal in giving any particular dinner party.

While it might seem odd to say in English that the party-giving of the appropriately restrained host is “for the sake of” the *kalon*, it may simply be that “for the sake of” does not perfectly precisely translate the expressions Aristotle uses to express this teleological relation: “*heneka* + genitive” or “*charin* + genitive.” It is a perfectly natural and well-attested use of these expressions in Classical Greek to indicate a constraining limit. In Plato’s *Republic*, the restrictions on physical intimacy allowed to lovers are delimited using *charin* + genitive. The lover may be with, kiss, and touch his beloved “for the sake of what is fine” (*tôn kalôn charin* – *Rep.* III, 403b6); that is, he will not engage in any intimacies that are shameful. Similarly, in the *Gorgias*, Socrates uses the expression “the pleasant is to be done for the sake of the good” (*heneka tou agathou*) to urge that our pursuit of pleasure must be constrained by our commitment to the good (*Gorg.* 506c9). Aristotle also uses “*charin* + genitive” in this limiting way in *E.N.* 1.13, when he explains that the statesman must study the human soul, but only as far as (*toutôn charin* – 1102a24) his goal of cultivating excellence in the citizens requires – that is, not in the depth that Aristotle himself pursues the inquiry in his work *De Anima*.¹⁶

The *kalon*, for Aristotle’s virtuous person, is a genuine goal of the activities whose pursuit it regulates. It is not merely a good that he prefers to, or ranks more highly than, his other objectives – such that he will always choose the *kalon* in circumstances in which it conflicts with any of the latter. Rather, it is a condition of his finding those alternatives desirable *tout court*. Faced with a conflict, in particular circumstances, between the pursuit of pleasure and adherence to the standards of the *kalon*, the virtuous person does not simply *prefer* the admirable option to the shameful one (in the sense that he desires the former more highly than he values the latter); he does not desire the disgraceful pleasure at all.¹⁷ This distinguishes the truly virtuous from the merely continent person; thus the former is pleased at his action and the latter is pained (*E.N.* 11.3, 1104b3–8).

¹⁶ I suspect that the puzzling occurrence of “*heneka tinos*” in the catalogue of particular ignorance at *E.N.* 111.1, 1111a5 is another instance of this use: while fully cognizant that one should not hit one’s sparring partner hard enough to cause injury, one may be ignorant of how hard (*tinis heneka*) one is in fact hitting him.

¹⁷ A point stressed by John McDowell in (1980), §13 and (1978), pp. 13–29.

Richardson Lear is right to point out that, for Aristotle, a genuine *end* must be a source of value to subordinate ends pursued for its sake (2004, p. 39). But she is wrong to claim that a constraint cannot perform this function. For Plato's Socrates in the *Republic*, wealth, reputation, and the like are not worth having unless they are acquired and used justly. Similarly, Aristotle claims that it is only for the good person that the objectives usually pursued as good are in fact good (*E.N.* III.4, 1113a25–b2). The virtuous person, as Aristotle conceives him, adopts just such a perspective: in a life without the prospect of living up to the standards of the *kalon*, none of his other objects of pursuit would be attractive to him. As Broadie characterizes such a motivation: the agent “may recognise some [other things] as good because of what they themselves are, and not because of something else [sc. the central good] which they make possible. But [he] may also recognise that without the central one he would not *want* any of the others ... In that sense the central good gives the others their point.”¹⁸

The fundamental error that Richardson Lear finds in Broadie's and Irwin's proposals is that the final good, as they conceive it, fails to determine the norms internal to the subordinate pursuits. It merely limits their pursuit, but does not determine *that they should be pursued* in the first place (38–39, 42–43). Similarly, on the version of these proposals that I am advocating, our commitment to the *kalon* determines that we should limit our pursuit of pleasure (or honor, or dinner parties) in the light of the *kalon*, but it does not tell us that we should pursue these objectives in the first place. Of the two ways in which one practice may regulate another – normative governance and external regulation – Richardson Lear insists that both are necessary for a genuine “for-the-sake-of” relation. But is this a legitimate requirement?

One might be persuaded that it is by focusing on the relation between the bridle maker, the cavalry rider, and the general. In each of these cases the higher pursuit, in addition to using the product or regulating the activity of the lower pursuits, also supplies the norms to those pursuits. But is this also true of the statesman's relation to all the pursuits he regulates in the city? Presumably it is true of some of them; for example, the statesman determines that the state must have a military capacity, not just when and whether it is to be exercised. But is this so of every pursuit that he will allow in the city? Are the citizens to be permitted to engage only in those activities that the statesman has determined are necessary for

¹⁸ Broadie (1991), p. 27, is not here specifically referring to the role the *kalon* plays in the virtuous person's life, but her discussion perfectly captures the structure of the virtuous person's motivation, as Aristotle describes it.

the project of living virtuous lives? To be sure, any activities that militate against the success of this project are to be disallowed. But are there not many others that are neutral with respect to that goal (provided that their practice is subject to the doctrine of the mean)? Think for example of all the leisure activities that might be pursued.¹⁹ (Even as staunch an advocate of state central planning as Plato does not suppose that the statesman or legislators will write the scripts for the songs and plays and games that are to be performed in the city!)

A full investigation of Aristotle's position on this specific question would require a study of the *Politics* and is thus beyond the scope of this paper. But we already have at hand, in Aristotle's detailed account of the ethical life, a compelling counterexample to Richardson Lear's assumption that a goal must not merely regulate, but also dictate, the activities performed for its sake. It is clear, upon reflection, that the ethical person's commitment to adhere to the standards of the *kalon* is not sufficient to determine or explain all of his actions, or even all of his subordinate goals. To be sure, there are some situations in which his commitment to the *kalon* makes it clear what he must do (or not do). This is the case, for example, when standing his ground in battle and risking his life is called for and fleeing his post would be shameful; or when being agreeable to a tyrant, laughing at a particular joke, or failing to take offence would be shameful. However, many more situations, perhaps even most of the situations in which an ethical person acts, are ones in which nothing admirable or shameful is at stake. Which socks shall I wear this morning? Shall I go to the movies tonight or stay home and read a book? Shall I become a doctor or a dentist? Should I marry George? Shall I have tea or coffee with my breakfast? Should I accept the job in Toronto or in New York?

While it is easy to dream up circumstances in which something ethically significant would be at stake in these choices, this is not invariably the case in these as well as myriad other choices that we make in the course of our lives. What an ethical person chooses in such situations, even though it is regulated by the norms of the *kalon*, is not required by them; nor is it even a means to that ultimate end. The pursuit of the *kalon* as an ultimate goal leaves open a very wide range of options in life, large-scale and small, which are indifferent with respect to their bearing on the *kalon*. We may call this the "space of permissions" left open by that ultimate commitment. A life devoted to the pursuit of the *kalon* may

¹⁹ Suppose, to borrow Ackrill's example, that golfing is to be allowed to the citizens. Does this mean that the rules of golf should issue from the statesman's political expertise in the way that the specifications for bridles issue from the equestrian craft?

therefore involve the pursuit of a wide variety of other goals that are valued and pursued for their own sakes, as long as a person's pursuit of them is regulated or limited by her commitment to the *kalon*. (Indeed, it must contain other such goals, or else she will be unable to make most of the choices she faces in life.)

This "space of permissions" opens up precisely because, in the ethical life, commitment to the *kalon* as an ultimate goal supplies a norm that is *external* to the pursuits it regulates, without also determining the norms internal to the regulated pursuits. Thus, the one life whose teleological structure Aristotle outlines in considerable detail in the *E.N.* – the life of ethical virtue – shows that our ultimate goal in life need not govern our subordinate pursuits in life as tightly as the general's goal regulates the activities of the cavalry. External regulation may ground a "for-the-sake-of" relation even in the absence of internal normative governance. This observation will be important for understanding how *theoria* can function as an ultimate end.

III CONTEMPLATION AS THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF LIFE

Of course Aristotle's view of the goal of life is more complicated than we have been considering so far. While he devotes a major part of the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics* to a detailed articulation of the ethical virtues, he makes it clear in *E.N.* x.7–8 that it is not the practical activity of these virtues but theoretical activity (*theoria*) of the intellectual virtues that best satisfies the criteria for happiness. The activity of the ethical excellences is a kind of happiness, but it is second best to *theoria* (1178a9). Granted, Aristotle does not explicitly claim in these chapters that it is for the sake of *theoria* that one should do everything in life;²⁰ indeed, the conception of happiness as such a comprehensive *telos* is not mentioned in these chapters.²¹ Nonetheless, unless we are to assume that Aristotle has in Book x abandoned the conception of happiness clearly and forcefully articulated in Book I, it seems clear that these chapters in *E.N.* x are proposing *theoria* as the best answer to the question articulated in Book I, of what is the ultimate goal for whose sake we should do everything in life.

What would be involved in having one's life organized around this goal? *E.N.* x.7–8 makes it clear, for example, that *theoria* could not

²⁰ As Natali points out (2001), pp. 174–75.

²¹ Only the constraint that happiness not be desired for the sake of anything else is invoked in this chapter, as one consideration among many (x.7, 1177b1–4, 13–15; cf. 1.7, 1097a25–34).

function as our goal in life in the same way it does for the gods. They, as pure intellects, engage in *theoria* uninterruptedly and in perpetuity while we – being human, with bodily and social needs – can engage in *theoria* at best episodically (*E.N.* x.7, 1177b26–31). The best human life will therefore consist of both theoretical and practical activity. But if *theoria* is to be the ultimate goal of such a life, then the practical activities within it (including the activities of the ethical virtues) must all be “for the sake of” *theoria*. How are we to understand this? This is a legitimate question to raise of Aristotle’s theory, even if it is not one that he himself addresses explicitly.

We might note for a start that, as in the case of the political paradigm presented at the opening of the *E.N.*, we are considering a case in which one set of pursuits (practical activities) is governed by a higher endeavor (the pursuit of *theoria*). As when the cavalry’s activity is governed by that of the general, or the general’s by that of the statesman in the well-ordered *polis*, the pursuit of practical activity in the properly directed life is to be governed by (“for the sake of”) the pursuit of *theoria*. Our analysis of the political model identified two ways in which one pursuit might be “for the sake of” another. In the first (normative governance), the controlling practice supplies the norms internal to the subordinate practice – as when cavalry riding determines the specifications for bridles or military strategy the standards for cavalry riding. In the second (external regulation), the controlling practice regulates when and whether the subordinate practice will be engaged in (as when the general determines when to send in the cavalry or how many bridles to order from the bridle maker, or the statesman determines what leisure activities and occupations will be allowed in the city). In which of these two ways might the ethical actions be subordinated to the pursuit of *theoria*?

One might reasonably doubt that Aristotle thinks the pursuit of *theoria* determines our practical activities in the first sense – that is, by providing the standards by which practical activities are to be judged excellent. There is certainly no evidence that Aristotle endorses anything even remotely like the thesis that actions are *kalon* to the extent that they promote or maximize one’s opportunities to engage in *theoria* – a highly revisionist criterion of conduct considerably at odds with the conservative bent of Aristotle’s discussions of the individual virtues of character. A very different and more promising proposal about how an ultimate commitment to *theoria* might supply the standards for practical reasoning has been articulated by Richardson Lear, who has argued that the standard of rationality exemplified by *theoria* is approximated in the

practical rationality constitutive of ethical excellence.²² Thus, a person's ultimate aim is to engage in *theoria*, but when enmeshed in the practical life and unable to theorize, one can approximate that kind of rational activity by using practical reasoning excellently. I think there is something deeply right about this proposal – although it is not my project here to defend it.

What I do want to insist on is that Aristotle clearly takes our commitment to the ultimate value of *theoria* to regulate our pursuit of practical activity in the *second sense*. Even though, being human, we are incapable of engaging in *theoria* uninterruptedly throughout our lives, he enjoins us to engage in this activity insofar as we are able (*E.N.* x.7, 1177b31–34). This is to say that our ultimate commitment to *theoria* should determine when and whether we will engage in practical activity. It is a common worry that this would mean that we are licensed to engage in *unethical* activity (disregard the standards of the *kalon*) when we have an opportunity to engage in *theoria*. For example, if I can finance an extended period of uninterrupted *theoria* by embezzling some money, am I not mandated to do it? Yes, it would be shameful and unjust, but if it goes undetected, is it not an excellent means to my highest and most important goal of engaging in reflection? The worry in its general form is that the goal of the ethical life, abiding by the *kalon*, if it is supposed to be regulated by our higher commitment to the pursuit of *theoria*, may be impeded or compromised by that higher pursuit.

Reflecting on the political paradigm allows us to defuse this familiar worry by distinguishing two very different questions that face the regulator of a practice. The first is whether to engage in the regulated pursuit at all. Thus the statesman deliberates about when and whether to go to war, and the general deliberates about when and whether to employ the cavalry. The second question is whether to interfere with the regulated pursuit once it is embarked upon. Regulation of the second sort involves the real danger of impediment and compromise to the regulated pursuit. Such would be the case if the generals, in addition to telling the bridle makers what kind of bridles to make and how many, overrode the bridle makers' expert judgment about what kind of leather to use and how to cut it, or if the statesman, in addition to determining the ethical limits on the use of force and deciding when and whether to declare war, meddled in the general's deployment of troops on the battlefield.

²² Richardson Lear (2004), pp. 3–4, 85–92, 196–207.

Regulation that concerns the first question, however, does not impede the regulated pursuit. Given Aristotle's emphasis on the ethical person's uncompromising commitment to the standards of virtuous choice – a point reiterated in *E.N.* x.8 (1178b5–6) – we must also suppose that this is how the ethical person's higher commitment to reflection will regulate his pursuit of the practical life. His higher commitment to reflection determines when and whether he will engage in practical activity as opposed to *theoria*, but it does not compromise his commitment, when engaged in the practical life, to abide by the standards of the *kalon*.²³ One is engaged in the practical life whenever one is exercising choice (*prohairesis*) – an activity of deliberative reasoning about contingent matters (*E.N.* III.3, 1113a9–12). While Aristotle categorically distinguishes such deliberative reasoning from the theoretical reasoning displayed in *theoria* (*E.N.* VI.2, 1139a6–14) he also recognizes that *theoria* is the subject of choice for human beings, for the decision to engage in *theoria* is itself an exercise of practical reason (*E.N.* VI.13, 1145a8–9). While engaging in *theoria* involves disengaging, for a time, from practical reasoning, the decision to disengage is itself within the scope of practical reasoning and thus subject to the norms of the virtues of character. The person who seizes an opportunity to *theorize* at the price of committing an injustice is like the statesman who interferes with the general's exercise of tactical judgment on the battlefield, or the general who meddles in the bridle maker's shop. In the well-regulated psyche envisaged by Aristotle, by contrast, practical reason is unimpeded and uncompromised as long as it is active, while at the same time it is limited by and subordinated to the commitment to *theoria* – in just the way the general's activities in the well-ordered city are regulated by the statesman.

One might object, at this point, that there is an important disanalogy with the political paradigm, in that the activity of the general *promotes* or *is a means* to the goal pursued by the statesman.²⁴ For example, in beating back the invading army, the general brings about the peace and security that the statesman seeks for the city. By contrast, the activities of practical

²³ That the primacy of *theoria* has practical implication for the choice between practical and theoretical activity rather than between ethical and unethical activity is nicely reflected in Cooper (1975), pp. 163–65, who stops short of saying that the imperative to engage in *theoria* will conflict with the demands of ethical action.

²⁴ Kraut insists that such "causal contribution" is necessary for a for-the-sake-of relation (Kraut [1989], pp. 200–02, 213, 215).

reason in the ethical life do not generally serve to promote the activity of contemplation; indeed Aristotle implies that, at least in the short term, the former impede and preclude the latter (*E.N.* x.8, 1178b4). So, if ethical actions are neither productive of nor a means to *theoria*, how could they be genuinely “for its sake”? This objection, however, presupposes something that was shown to be false in the case of the ethical life. There we saw that not every subordinate pursuit in a life organized around an ultimate goal is required by the pursuit of that goal. Abiding by the *kalon* as an ultimate objective, we saw, requires us to perform certain actions and refrain from others, but it also leaves open a “space of permissions” whose limits are determined by that ultimate goal, but where choice must be determined by invoking other norms. In such cases, the regulated activity is not productive of, or a means to, the governing pursuit. For example, an ethical person’s choices of a day’s apparel, a life mate, or an evening’s entertainments take place within a “space of permissions” left open by his ultimate commitment to the *kalon*, without “promoting” the *kalon* or being a means to it. So too we may understand our engagement in practical activity quite generally to take place in the space of permissions left open by our ultimate commitment to *theoria*, without promoting or being a means to *theoria*.

But isn’t it more correct, on the interpretation I am defending, to say that *theoria* takes place within the space of permissions in the ethical life, rather than the other way around? To the extent that one’s commitment to the norms of ethical excellence is uncompromising (so that one will not theorize at the expense of justice), the imperative to *theorize* at *E.N.* x.7, 1177b33–34 is constrained by and subordinated to the pursuit of ethical excellence. Doesn’t *theoria* turn out to be just one among a number of valuable ends whose pursuit is regulated by one’s allegiance to the standards of right action? (Note how close we are here to the inclusivist interpretation, on its most defensible articulation.)

In response it must be conceded that *theoria*, for Aristotle, does fall within the scope of practical wisdom. He explicitly recognizes it as such when he raises the puzzle at the end of *E.N.* vi about how to reconcile the superiority of intellectual to practical excellence with the equally evident fact that cultivating and exercising theoretical excellence is within the scope of practical reason (*E.N.* vi.12, 1143b33–35). His solution to that puzzle, however, makes it clear that intellectual excellence (and presumably also its activity, *theoria*) still functions as the goal of excellent practical reasoning. It is within the scope of practical reasoning, without

being subordinated to it, in just the same way that health is within the scope of the medical craft (which brings it about) but at the same time serves as that craft's end:

Neither is practical wisdom [*phronesis*] sovereign over intellectual wisdom [*sophia*] or over the better of the two rational parts, any more than medical expertise is sovereign over health; for it does not employ it, but rather sees to it that it comes into existence, so that it prescribes on its behalf, not to it. It is as if one said that political expertise rules over the gods, because it issues prescriptions about everything in the city. (*E.N.* VI.13, 1145a6–11)

Even though practical reason controls whether and when we will engage in *theoria*, practical reason is not thereby “using” or directing *theoria* as a subordinate practice (in the way, for example, the statesman employs the general). Rather than legislating *to theoria*, practical wisdom legislates *on its behalf*—in the same way that the statesman looks to the gods for guidance when making laws about religious observance. This is, as Aristotle remarks, not to rule the gods, but to be ruled by them.

Aristotle clearly recognizes that *theoria* is both within the scope of practical reason (as an activity one can choose to engage in) and also above it (as a higher goal whose pursuit limits the pursuit of practical reasoning). This twofold status of *theoria* is a function of the human condition, as Aristotle conceives it. As human beings we exercise choice; thus *theoria*, as an activity we choose to engage in, is subject to the norms that govern choice. But, as beings capable of engaging in *theoria*, we share in the divine nature (*E.N.* x.7, 1177a15–16) and are bound by the imperative to exercise it (1177b31–34). *Theoria* is thus our best and ultimate good, not simply one among the many goods we pursue in life.

One might wonder at this point how far we are from Ackrill's own view. While dissenting from Ackrill's denial, on Aristotle's behalf, that *theoria* is our single ultimate goal in life, I am in agreement with his claim that, for Aristotle, both *theoria* and ethical activity (“right actions” in Ackrill's terminology) are the constituents of the happy life. In Ackrill's view, Aristotle failed to specify principles about how to combine these two activities in the best human life, and Ackrill himself expressed pessimism about whether any such principles could honor both the evident priority that Aristotle assigns to *theoria*, and his uncompromising attitude toward the demands of ethical excellence.²⁵ One of the things I hope to have shown in this essay is that Aristotle has in fact indicated (even if not explicitly specified) these principles. Very roughly: in all your

²⁵ See Ackrill (1980), pp. 31–33.

choices, abide by the *kalon* – but when blessed with the opportunity to desist from choice and exercise *theoria*, embrace it. If my argument is successful, it has also shown, by drawing on Ackrill's own insights into the "for-the-sake-of" relation, how these principles also express the way in which *theoria* may function as the ultimate goal of an uncompromisingly ethical life.

Contemplation and eudaimonia in the Nicomachean Ethics

Norman O. Dahl

Over the years Aristotle's discussion of contemplation and *eudaimonia* in Book x of the *Nicomachean Ethics* has been a thorn in the side of his readers. Some commentators have taken it to be inconsistent with the rest of the *N.E.*,¹ one even maintaining that it was not meant seriously but instead was an instance of irony.² Among the reasons for these reactions are the following.

Although contemplation is mentioned in *N.E.* 1.5 as a candidate for the good whose realization in a life constitutes a life of *eudaimonia*, almost all of the *N.E.* leading up to *N.E.* x is occupied with rather detailed discussions of ethical virtue,³ various specific ethical virtues, and topics such as practical wisdom, continence and incontinence, pleasure, and friendship, all of which have important connections with ethical virtue. In the middle of *N.E.* x, however, Aristotle seems to say that contemplation is the good whose realization in a life constitutes the primary form of *eudaimonia*. The political life, a life that includes the exercise of ethical virtue, is only a secondary form of *eudaimonia*. Where did this pre-eminence

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¹ For example, Cooper (1975).

² For example, Moline (1983).

³ Ethical virtue (*ethikē arête*) consists of virtues of character such as courage, temperance, justice, and greatness of soul. As Aristotle says in *N.E.* 1.13, these are virtues of the part of the non-rational part of the soul that listens to reason, and which he defines in *N.E.* 11.6, 1106b36–1107a1 in terms of a disposition to choose involving a mean determined by reason. As such, ethical virtues are distinct from the virtues of a *technē* (craft) and from virtues of the theoretical and the practical intellect, even though they are intimately tied to a particular virtue of the practical intellect, practical wisdom (*phronēsis*).

of contemplation come from? After all the attention he has given to ethical virtue, how could Aristotle relegate a life of ethical virtue to second place?

Furthermore, if a life of contemplation is the primary form of *eudaimonia*, why won't ethical virtue get systematically sacrificed in such a life? It certainly seems as if a person who engages in contemplation could lack many of the ethical virtues. Also, Aristotle doesn't address the possibility of conflicts between ethical virtue and contemplation, or how they should be resolved. It is hard to believe that he was unaware of their possibility. Why didn't he discuss them and their resolution?

Before considering answers to these questions, it is worth noting a distinction to which Aristotle is committed, a distinction implicit in what I have already said. Strictly speaking, the good for human beings, *eudaimonia*, is a certain kind of life – a life devoted to a certain good. Immediately after concluding at *N.E.* 1.7, 1098a16–18 that *eudaimonia* is rational activity in accord with virtue, Aristotle adds “in a complete life.”⁴ At *N.E.* 1.10, 1100a10–11 he asks whether one needs to wait until a life is over before determining whether it exhibited *eudaimonia*. In discussing primary and secondary *eudaimonia* in *N.E.* x.6–8, he does so in terms of two kinds of life – a life of contemplation and a life of political and ethical virtue. *Eudaimonia*, then, is a life devoted to a certain good. Distinct from such a life is the good to which it is devoted, a good that if sufficiently realized in a life will make that life a life of *eudaimonia*. Following Sarah Broadie,⁵ I shall call such a good the central good. Aristotle may not always clearly adhere to this distinction,⁶ but it is a distinction to which he is committed.

This distinction has an important consequence. Although the central good may not be sought for the sake of anything else, it will be sought for the sake of *eudaimonia*. For example, if pursuing the central good on one occasion could prevent its pursuit on other occasions, a person who self-consciously and successfully lives a life of *eudaimonia* will pursue the central good only when achieving it, together with other occasions on which it might be achieved, would make his life a life of *eudaimonia*. The central good, thus, will be pursued for the sake of *eudaimonia*.

⁴ See also *N.E.* 1.9, 1104–5 and *N.E.* 1.10, 1101a14–16, where he says that *eudaimonia* is virtuous activity in a complete life.

⁵ See Broadie (1991), p. 26.

⁶ See, e.g., *N.E.* 1.5, where Aristotle moves between the identification of *eudaimonia* with such goods as pleasure, wealth, or honor and the identification of *eudaimonia* with a life of pleasure, wealth, etc.

I

Until recently, commentators have adopted one of two general approaches to the questions raised at the beginning of this chapter, each based in part on a certain understanding of Aristotle's discussion in *N.E.* 1 of *eudaimonia* and the central good.⁷

The first approach takes the central good to be a single, relatively specific end – contemplation – with other ends sought for their own sake being sought as instrumental means to it. This is the so-called “dominant end” view found, for example, in the work of Anthony Kenny and Richard Kraut.⁸ *N.E.* x takes primary *eudaimonia* to be a life devoted to contemplation. Such a life will include the exercise of ethical virtue to the extent to which ethical virtue is an instrumental means to contemplation. This latter relation can then be used to resolve any conflicts that might arise between contemplation and the exercise of ethical virtue.

The second approach takes the central good to be an end that includes specific ends sought for their own sake, these latter being sought as “constitutive means”⁹ to that end. This is the “inclusive end” view of J. L. Ackrill and John Cooper, among others.¹⁰ *Eudaimonia* is a life that realizes this inclusive end. *N.E.* x describes primary *eudaimonia* as a life of contemplation because contemplation is pre-eminent among the ends that constitute this inclusive end. Secondary *eudaimonia* is a life that realizes the ends in this inclusive end except for contemplation. Any potential conflict between contemplation and ethical virtue in a life of contemplation can be resolved by seeing just how pre-eminent contemplation is in comparison with ethical virtue in the totality of ends that make up this inclusive end.

Recently, a third approach has emerged.¹¹ Like the first, it takes the central good to be contemplation. However, the for-the-sake-of relation

⁷ The following amount to general descriptions of approaches taken to understand Aristotle's account of *eudaimonia* in the *N.E.* The views of various commentators will fit these descriptions to various degrees.

⁸ See Kenny (1978); Kenny (1993); and Kraut (1989).

⁹ If one wants to serve a special dinner, deciding on the menu that would make up the dinner is a determination of constitutive means. Determining how to secure and prepare the ingredients for this menu is a determination of instrumental means. From the time of Greenwood (1909), pp. 46–48, it has been commonplace to recognize that Aristotle's means–end relation (*ta pros to telos*) is broad enough to include both constitutive and instrumental means.

¹⁰ See Ackrill (1980) and Cooper (1999c).

¹¹ It can be found in Richardson Lear (2004). (See also Cooper [2004b] and, to some extent, Charles [1999].) Although the view I defend here is different from Richardson Lear's, my debt to her should be clear from what follows.

in which other ends sought for their own sake can be sought for the sake of contemplation need not be either instrumental or constitutive means. It can be “approximation.” Just as animal reproduction is for the sake of the divine because it approximates the divine by contributing to the eternal existence of animal species, so the exercise of ethical virtue is for the sake of contemplation, approximating contemplation by realizing in its way the kind of virtuous activity that contemplation realizes fully. A life is a life of primary *eudaimonia* solely in virtue of the contemplation in it. Such a life includes the exercise of ethical virtue, because by nature human beings can’t spend their lives entirely in contemplation, and because ethical virtue is worth exercising for its own sake because it approximates contemplation. Secondary *eudaimonia* is simply a life of political and ethical virtue. Any conflict between contemplation and the exercise of ethical virtue in a life of contemplation can be resolved by determining how best to achieve ethical virtue in a life in which, because of the limits imposed by human nature, a human being can’t continuously contemplate.

A fourth approach has also recently appeared.¹² According to it, contemplation is the divine good, the human good being ethical virtue. A few human beings are capable of sharing in the divine good, and their lives will be better if they achieve it along with ethical virtue. Such a life is primary *eudaimonia*, a happiness that is both human and divine. It is secondary *eudaimonia*, a life of political and ethical virtue, which is human happiness.

I shall support another approach. It takes *eudaimonia* to be what the “function argument” in *N.E.* 1.7 says it is – a life of rational activity in accord with virtue and, if there is more than one virtue, in accord with the best and most final virtue in accord with which rational activity can occur (hereafter the best and most final virtue). It takes this to say that *eudaimonia* is a life of rational activity in accord with virtue *including* the best and most final virtue. Like the inclusive end view, this approach takes *eudaimonia* to involve the realization of more than one kind of specific end. Unlike the inclusive end view, it takes the central good to be a single, general end – rational activity in accord with virtue including the best and most final virtue. It then takes *N.E.* x to argue that contemplation is activity in accord with the best and most final virtue. Primary *eudaimonia* turns out to be a life of contemplation and ethical and political virtue, secondary *eudaimonia* being a life of only ethical and political

¹² In Bush (2008) and, to some extent, Scott (1999).

virtue.¹³ Any potential conflict between contemplation and ethical virtue within primary *eudaimonia* is to be decided in the same way that potential conflicts between ethical virtues are to be decided – through an exercise of practical wisdom (*phronēsis*).

II

Although this last approach is compatible with more than one way of understanding contemplation (*theoria*),¹⁴ let me indicate how I understand contemplation in the *N.E.*

Elsewhere in the *N.E.*, “*theōria*” can have a broad use amounting to something like appreciative observation or appreciative reflection.¹⁵ However, Aristotle has a more restricted use in mind when he speaks in the *N.E.* of contemplation and *eudaimonia*. *N.E.* VI provides a basis for determining how this more restricted notion should be understood.¹⁶

In raising a puzzle about the usefulness of theoretical wisdom (*sophia*), Aristotle notes that *sophia* is said not to be of any use because it doesn’t contemplate (*theōrei*) what makes men happy (VI.12, 1143b19–20). In response to this puzzle he says that the actualization (and hence the exercise) of *sophia* produces happiness because *sophia* is part of virtue entire (VI.12, 1144a5–6). This implies that contemplation is the exercise of *sophia*. In *N.E.* VI *sophia* is said to be *nous* plus *epistēmē* (VI.7, 1141a18–19) – *nous* being an understanding of the first principles of an Aristotelian science and *epistēmē* the demonstrative knowledge of what follows from these principles. Contemplation, thus, turns out to be reflective appreciation of the nature of the world as revealed by Aristotelian science.¹⁷

¹³ The view of primary and secondary *eudaimonia* that this approach endorses is essentially that of Broadie (2002) (see section VIII below). It is also quite similar, if not equivalent, to the “superstructure” view defended by Keyt (1978). However, virtually all of the arguments I offer in support of it are my own.

¹⁴ It is not compatible, however, with the way Garver (2006), Chapter 7, understands contemplation, who takes it to consist in reflective self-awareness that one is engaged in activity in accord with *phronēsis*. As I indicate below, I take *N.E.* VI to set out a different conception of contemplation.

¹⁵ See, e.g., *N.E.* IV.2, 1122b15–18, where Aristotle says that contemplation (*theōria*) of a great and beautiful result of an act of magnificence inspires admiration.

¹⁶ One may have to be somewhat cautious here. *N.E.* VI is part of the “common books.” If they originally belonged to the *Eudemian Ethics*, then what is said in them might supersede or be superseded by what is said in the rest of the *N.E.* However, if the “common books” are common, *N.E.* VI should in general fit the rest of the *N.E.* Besides, there is little basis elsewhere in the *N.E.* for determining how contemplation should be understood in that work.

¹⁷ It is true that Aristotle says at *N.E.* VI.7, 1141b2–3 that *sophia* is of objects that are highest by nature, something that might lead one to think that contemplation is only of divine objects, or perhaps only of Aristotle’s god. (See, e.g., Reeve [2006], pp. 201–02.) However, since Aristotle

So understood, it is similar to what goes on when one appreciates the elegance of a mathematical proof with which one is familiar, or the harmonic development of a piece of music with which one is familiar.

III

With that understanding of contemplation in place, let us see what can be said on behalf of the view of the relationship between *eudaimonia* and contemplation that I presented at the end of section 1. We can begin with Aristotle's discussion of *eudaimonia* and the central good in the first part of *N.E.* 1.7, where he sets out three conditions meant to shed light on *eudaimonia*.

(1) Since there are evidently more ends than one, and we choose some of these (e.g., wealth, flutes, and in general instruments) for the sake of something else, clearly not all ends are final ends; but the chief good is evidently something final. Therefore, if there is only one final end, this will be what we are seeking, and if there is more than one, the most final of these will be what we are seeking. Now we call that which is in itself worthy of pursuit more final than that which is worthy of pursuit for the sake of something else, and that which is never desirable for the sake of something else more final than the things that are desirable both in themselves and for the sake of that other thing, and therefore we call final without qualification that which is always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else. (1097a25–35, replacing “complete” by “final” in the Revised Oxford translation)¹⁸

(2) From the point of view of self-sufficiency the same result seems to follow; for the final good is thought to be self-sufficient. Now by self-sufficient we do not mean that which is sufficient for a man by himself, for one who lives a solitary life, but also for parents, children, wife, and in general for his friends and fellow citizens, since man is sociable by nature ... the self-sufficient we now define as that which when isolated makes life desirable and lacking in nothing. (1097b7–14, replacing “complete” by “final” in the Revised Oxford translation)

(3) ... and further we think it most desirable of all things, without being counted as one good thing among others – if it [is] [were] so counted it would clearly be made more desirable by the addition of even the least of goods; for that which is added becomes an excess of goods, and of goods the greater is always more desirable ... (1097b17–20, slight variation of the Revised Oxford translation)

takes the objects of an Aristotelian science to be eternal (e.g., species of animals), I see no reason why such objects can't be among objects that are highest by nature. Even some of the objects of ethics might have a claim to being among these highest objects, since at *N.E.* 1.12, 1102a1–4 Aristotle says that *eudaimonia* is a first principle (an *archē*) and divine (*theion*). Still, if the arguments I give in this chapter go through, they will go through on a more restricted understanding of contemplation.

¹⁸ Unless otherwise specified, all translations are those of the Revised Oxford translation.

At first sight, these passages are about *eudaimonia*. Aristotle does say that *eudaimonia* is thought to satisfy these conditions,¹⁹ and it is a life of *eudaimonia* rather than the central good that is most final. On the other hand, self-sufficiency seems to be about the central good, since it is about a good that when present in a life makes that life desirable and lacking in nothing. As a result, I think it is best to take these passages to be about *eudaimonia* and the central good, setting out conditions that a life of *eudaimonia* satisfies in virtue of corresponding conditions satisfied by the central good.

For example, a life of *eudaimonia* is most final because the good realized in it, the central good, is final in that it is sought for its own sake, other things are sought for the sake of it, it not being sought for the sake of anything else except *eudaimonia*. A life of *eudaimonia* is self-sufficient and so desirable and lacking in nothing because the central good is self-sufficient, being something that when present in a life makes that life desirable and lacking in nothing. A life of *eudaimonia* is most desirable without being counted as one good among others, because the central good is desirable without being counted as one good among others.

All of this might be taken to support the inclusive end view. Taking the central good to be an inclusive end seems to explain why a life that realizes it is most final. The specific ends sought for their own sake that constitute this inclusive end are sought as constitutive means of that inclusive end, but the central good is not sought for the sake of any of the ends that constitute it, nor for anything else, except a life that realizes it. A life that realizes such an inclusive end would, thus, seem to be most final.

The inclusive end view also seems to fit self-sufficiency, and to explain why *eudaimonia* is not to be counted as one good among others. Achieving the relevant inclusive end in a life would seem to make that life desirable and lacking in nothing, since any good that might make that life more desirable would already be included in this inclusive end. An inclusive end constituted by certain specific goods is not on the same level as the goods that constitute it, and so should not be counted as one good among them. However, if it were so counted – if it were regarded as a specific good on the same level as the goods that make it up – then, like any such good, it would be made more desirable by the addition of even the least of goods. Similarly for a life that realizes such an inclusive end.

However, the inclusive end view faces problems. The other candidates for the central good mentioned in the first part of *N.E.* I – e.g., in *N.E.* I.5,

¹⁹ Cf. I.7, 1097a35–b7, 1097b16, and 1097b20–21.

wealth, pleasure, honor, virtue, and contemplation – are all single, rather specific goods, not inclusive ends. Taking the central good to be such a single good rather than an inclusive end seems to fit this part of *N.E.* I.²⁰

More importantly, the inclusive end view faces a potential dilemma. Since specific goods sought for their own sake can sometimes come in conflict with one another, the central good can't simply be the end that includes all such goods. One way of limiting it would be to say that it is the best combination of goods sought for their own sake. But then the central good would seem to be a single, general end – the best combination of goods sought for their own sake. The same thing can be said for any other general description that explains why an inclusive end identified as the central good contains the specific goods that constitute it.²¹

That Aristotle recognizes that a particular end can be sought because it realizes such a general end can be seen from an example of deliberation in *Metaphysics* 1032b6–10.

The healthy subject, then, is produced as the result of the following train of thought; since *this* is health, if the subject is to be healthy *this* must first be present, e.g., a uniform state of body, and if this is to be present, there must be heat; and the physician goes on thinking thus until he brings the matter to a final step which he himself can take.

According to Greek medicine, health is a harmony of various states or elements of the body. Suppose that a physician could produce heat in a patient by rubbing the patient's body. If producing heat in this way were to restore the patient's health, then that heat, together with other bodily states of the patient at that time, would realize the kind of harmony that is health. Such heat would be sought because, when coupled with these other states, it would realize the kind of harmony that is health.

Thus, if certain specific ends are taken to constitute an inclusive end because they satisfy a general condition, then it looks as if a proponent of the inclusive end view would do better to take the central good to be a single, more general end understood in terms of that general condition. The best combination of goods sought for their own sake would be one such general end. Another would be rational activity in accord with virtue including activity in accord with the best and most final virtue.

²⁰ See, e.g., Kenny (1993), pp. 25–26, and Richardson Lear (2004), p. 26. It is not clear how much weight should be given to this consideration. One might argue that in *N.E.* I the central good ends up being contrasted with these other candidates for the good. One such contrast is between a single, specific good and an inclusive end. However, the consideration does seem worth mentioning.

²¹ Richardson Lear (2004), pp. 42–43, raises this sort of problem for a different inclusive end view.

On the other hand, if one were to understand an inclusive end simply in terms of the specific ends that make it up, then the inclusive end view faces a problem raised by Richardson Lear. She points out that according to Aristotle something sought for the sake of a good end acquires at least part of its goodness from the goodness of that good end, and so doesn't have all of its goodness independently of that end.²² But the goodness of an inclusive end understood solely in terms of the specific ends that make it up depends entirely on the prior, independent goodness of those specific ends. So understood, an inclusive end view will be incapable of explaining the dependence that the ends which constitute an inclusive end have on the central good. However, as Richardson Lear points out, taking these ends to approximate the central good would provide such an explanation. So would the view that the central good is rational activity in accord with virtue, including activity in accord with the best and most final virtue.

Even if this potential dilemma doesn't exhaust the ways in which one can specify the make-up of an inclusive end, its two horns provide grounds for taking seriously the view that the central good is a single end – either a single specific end such as contemplation that more specific ends can approximate, or a more general end such as rational activity in accord with virtue including the best and most final virtue, which more specific ends can realize. Such a view provides a way of understanding the for-the-sake-of relation that is involved in being a final end, and it doesn't fall prey to either horn of the dilemma.

Taking the central good to be such a single end also fits self-sufficiency. It is important to note that when Aristotle says that a self-sufficient good is that which when isolated makes a life possessing it lacking in nothing, he is not saying that all by itself such a good will make a life containing it lack nothing. The kind of good he is talking about is self-sufficient, not for a man by himself, but for someone with family, friends, and fellow citizens (1097b8–11). It is something that in a life that has sufficient external goods, including friends and family, will be enough to make that life desirable and lacking in nothing.²³

But how does a self-sufficient good make a life with sufficient external goods lacking in nothing? The answer is that it is enough to make such a

²² See Richardson Lear (2004), pp. 42–43.

²³ Cf. *N.E.* 1.10, 1100b25–30 and 1101a5–7, where Aristotle says that someone who has suffered the tragic loss of his family won't lead a life of *eudaimonia* even if he were to exercise ethical virtue. Without the external good of family his life lacks something important.

life worth living and sufficiently satisfying to be called happy.²⁴ The reason this answer is plausible is that there is an important sense in which a life that is worth living and satisfying enough to be called happy doesn't lack anything important.

Accepting this explanation of why the central good is self-sufficient also allows one to understand why the central good is desirable without being counted as one good among others, but that if it is or were so counted it would be made better by the least of goods. The central good is not to be counted as one good among others, particularly those specific goods sought for its sake, because these latter goods owe at least part of their goodness to the central good but it does not owe any of its goodness to them, and because given sufficient external goods none of these other goods will by itself be enough to make a life containing it worth living and satisfying enough to be called happy.

This doesn't mean that a life with sufficient external goods that realizes the central good can't be made better by the addition of even the least of goods. Consider a candidate for a good that when sufficient external goods are present would make a life containing it worth living and satisfying enough to be called happy – being a morally good person, or achieving the artistic output of a Bach. If one day a person who leads such a life takes a walk and the cherry blossoms are not yet in full bloom, that person's life would have been slightly better were she to have experienced the cherry blossoms in full bloom. But whether her life was or wasn't better in this way won't affect whether she is leading a life that is worth living and sufficiently satisfying to be called happy. That will come from her being morally good, or her artistic output, or whatever.

Thus, a life that realizes a single good such as contemplation could be the most final, self-sufficient, and most desirable good if other things sought for their own sake approximated contemplation and if the presence of contemplation in a life containing sufficient external goods would make that life worth living and sufficiently satisfying to be called happy. But the same thing can be said for a life that realizes the general end,

²⁴ Richardson Lear's answer (2004), p. 62, is that it is something which given sufficient external goods will make a life that realizes it worth living. I add "and sufficiently satisfying to be called happy" just in case it is thought that a person who suffered the tragic loss of his family could still live a life worth living if he exercised ethical virtue. Such a life would still lack something important. It might be thought that this addition is unnecessary because the presence of sufficient external goods in a worthwhile life would be enough to make that life satisfying enough to be called happy. Perhaps it would. But it still won't hurt to mention this aspect of a life that lacks nothing.

rational activity in accord with virtue including the best and most final virtue, if the exercise of ethical and political virtue and contemplation in a life containing sufficient external goods would make that life worth living and sufficiently satisfying to be called happy.

One final point is worth mentioning before considering the next part of *N.E.* 1.7. That is the extent to which self-sufficiency admits of a threshold, and so of degrees. Could there be a good which if present in a life containing sufficient external goods would make that life worth living and satisfying enough to be called happy, but which, with the addition of another good, could make that life even more worth living and satisfying? Such a good would not be one of the least of goods, because even if adding one of the least of goods to a life that is worth living and sufficiently satisfying would make that life slightly better, it wouldn't make that life more worth living and sufficiently satisfying. But suppose either being morally good or achieving the artistic output of a Bach would make a life with sufficient external goods worth living and sufficiently satisfying to be called happy. Couldn't being morally good and achieving the artistic output of a Bach make one's life even more worth living and satisfying?

The reason this is important is that if this were possible, it would provide a basis for understanding why in *N.E.* x Aristotle could take a life of contemplation and political and ethical virtue to be the primary form of *eudaimonia* and a life of just ethical and political virtue to be a secondary form of *eudaimonia*. The exercise of ethical and political virtue in a life with sufficient external goods would be enough to make that life worth living and sufficiently satisfying to be called happy. But realizing ethical and political virtue and contemplation in such a life would make that life even more worth living and satisfying and so a prime candidate for the primary form of *eudaimonia*.

I see no reason why self-sufficiency shouldn't admit of this kind of threshold.²⁵

²⁵ One might ask how a notion of self-sufficiency that admits of degrees fits with being most final, something that doesn't admit of degrees. First, being final admits of degrees. An end sought for its own sake and only for the sake of *eudaimonia* is more final than an end sought for the sake of another end and for the sake of *eudaimonia*. Second, one can identify the most final life with the most self-sufficient life. If, given sufficient external goods, political and ethical virtue were enough to make a life worth living and satisfying enough to be called happy, but also engaging in contemplation would make that life even more worth living and satisfying, then the latter life would be more self-sufficient than a life of just ethical and political virtue. If nothing else could be added to make such a life even more worth living and satisfying, then it will be the most self-sufficient life. It will also be most final. (I am grateful to Jovana Davidovic for impressing on me the need to answer this question.)

IV

After concluding that *eudaimonia* is most final, self-sufficient and most desirable and not one good to be counted among others, Aristotle recognizes that this doesn't provide much content for *eudaimonia* (1097b22). He says we might provide more content for it if we could ascertain the *ergon* (the characteristic activity or function) of human beings, something he says is *idion* (unique) to human beings (1097b24–25, 1098a1). Taking the *ergon* of human beings to be rational activity, he concludes that *eudaimonia* is rational activity in accord with virtue, and that if there is more than one such virtue, rational activity in accord with the best and most final virtue – in a complete life (1098a16–18).

But should one understand this to say that *eudaimonia* is a life of rational activity simply in accord with the best and most final virtue, or should one take it to say that *eudaimonia* is rational activity in accord with virtue including the best and most final virtue? David Charles argues against the latter reading, saying that had Aristotle intended it he would have added phrases such as “in accordance with all of them” and “particularly,” also maintaining that the terms Aristotle uses, “best” and “many virtues,” most naturally contrast one pre-eminent virtue with many others rather than introducing the idea of an activity in accord with all of them.²⁶ However, if the text admits of both readings, as I think it does,²⁷ then the argument from what Aristotle doesn't say works both ways. Had Aristotle intended to say that the human good was simply a life in accord with the best and most complete virtue, he would have added “simply” or “only.” Better yet, had Aristotle taken pains to make clear what he intended to say, he would have added either “in accordance with all of them” and “particularly,” or “simply” or “only.” Since he didn't, one needs to look at the context of the passage to determine which reading he intended. Besides, the contrast between many virtues and the best and most final virtue has a point on the reading I prefer. Activity in accord with the latter virtue needs to be included if a life of virtuous rational activity is to achieve (what *N.E.* x calls primary) *eudaimonia*.

Furthermore, the context of this passage provides a reason to accept the reading I prefer. Aristotle says that the *ergon* of human beings is *idion* to them. However, according to Aristotle, although rational activity is

²⁶ See Charles (1999), p. 210.

²⁷ The relevant text is “*ei d' outō, to anthropinōn agathon psuchēs energeia ginetai kat' aretēn, ei d' pleious ai aretai, kata tēn aristēn kai teleiotatēn.*”

unique to human beings when compared with other animals, it is not unique to human beings when compared with his god, since his god engages in contemplation. This has led some commentators to maintain that “*idion*” here needs to be understood in terms of a class of comparison that does not include Aristotle’s god, the class of animals.²⁸ However, one can understand the *ergon* of human beings as being unique to them when compared with both other animals and Aristotle’s god if the *ergon* of human beings includes practical and theoretical rational activity. Other animals don’t exhibit this sort of rational activity. Neither does Aristotle’s god, since he engages only in the activity of contemplation. Given this way of understanding the *ergon* of human beings, it looks as if one should take *eudaimonia* to be a life of rational activity in accord with the virtues of practical and theoretical rational activity, and so take it to be a life of rational activity in accord with virtue including the best and most final virtue.²⁹

Given what I have argued so far, one would expect *eudaimonia* in its primary form to be a life of contemplation and ethical and political virtue, with a life simply of ethical and political virtue being a secondary form of *eudaimonia*.

V

One other part of the *N.E.* is worth noting before turning to *N.E.* x to see whether this expectation is borne out. It contains the passages I referred to in section II when I indicated how contemplation should be understood in the *N.E.*

In VI.12 Aristotle raises some puzzles concerning the usefulness and value of theoretical wisdom (*sophia*) and practical wisdom (*phronēsis*).

²⁸ See, e.g., Kraut (1979).

²⁹ Bush (2008), pp. 63–64, argues that the *ergon* of human beings consists only in the activity of practical reason, citing *N.E.* 1.7, 1098a3–6 in support of this view: “There remains, then, an active life of the element that has a rational principle (of this, one part has such a principle in the sense of being obedient to one, the other in the sense of possessing one and exercising thought).”

He takes the two parts referred to here to be the parts of the soul that allow a person to conform his behavior to practical reason. Accordingly, he treats the best and most final virtue referred at 1098a17–19 to be *phronēsis* rather than the intellectual virtue exhibited by contemplation.

However, the second part of the soul referred to in 1098a3–6, the part that possesses a principle and exercises thought, can be taken to include both practical and theoretical reason. Understanding this part of the soul in this way fits Aristotle’s taking contemplation to be a candidate for the chief good in *N.E.* 1.5. It also explains why Aristotle says at *N.E.* VI.12 1143b36–1147a7 that both *sophia* and *phronēsis* produce *eudaimonia*. (For more on this point, see section v below.) Finally, if as I maintain in section VII below, *N.E.* x.6–8 argues that contemplation is activity in accord with the best and most final virtue, theoretical activity will have to be included in the *ergon* of human beings.

According to one of them, *sophia* is not of any use because it doesn't contemplate (*theōrei*) anything that makes men happy (1143b19–20). Aristotle raises a similar puzzle in connection with *phronēsis*. In response to these puzzles he says:

Now first let us say that in themselves these states must be worthy of choice because they are excellences of the two parts of the soul respectively, even if neither of them produces anything.

Secondly, they do produce something, not as the art of medicine produces health, however, but as health produces health; so does wisdom (*sophia*) produce happiness (*eudaimonia*), for, being a part of excellence entire (*tēs holēs arētēs*), by being possessed and by actualizing itself it makes a man happy.

Again, the function (*ergon*) of man is achieved only in accordance with practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) as well as with moral excellences (*tēn ethikēn aretēn*). (1143b36–1144a7)

Here both contemplation and the exercise of ethical virtue are said to contribute to *eudaimonia*. *Sophia*, part of virtue entire, contributes to *eudaimonia* because its actualization in contemplation makes men happy. Ethical virtue contributes to *eudaimonia* because the *ergon* of human beings, the kind of rational activity which when in accord with virtue constitutes *eudaimonia*, is achieved through the exercise of *phronēsis* and ethical virtue. *Eudaimonia*, thus, seems to be a life of rational activity in accord with virtue, including the best and most final virtue.³⁰

VI

Let's now turn to *N.E.* x.6–8. At first sight, it appears to argue that contemplation is the central good, so that primary *eudaimonia* is simply a life of contemplation. Although I shall argue for a different way of understanding this part of *N.E.* x, let's first see why it seems so natural to take x.6–8 in this way.

It is clear from the beginning of x.6 that Aristotle's argument in x.6–8 refers back to, and so relies in some way on, what *N.E.* I said about *eudaimonia* and the central good. It also adds considerations not found in *N.E.* I. The argument in x.6–8 can be understood to rest on the following six steps.

(i) *N.E.* I says that the good for human beings is most final because the central good, the good realized in such a life, is desired for its own sake

³⁰ Again, one may need to be somewhat cautious here. If the "common books" originally belonged to the *E.E.*, then what is said in *N.E.* vi may supersede or be superseded by what is said elsewhere in the *N.E.* But again, if the "common books" are common, what is said in *N.E.* vi should in general fit the rest of the *N.E.*

and not for the sake of anything else except *eudaimonia* (1097a25–35 and section III above). Aristotle echoes this point at x.6, 1176b3–6, going on to argue in x.7 that contemplation is desired for its own sake in a way that the exercise of political or ethical virtue is not.

Nothing arises from contemplation except contemplation, whereas the exercise of political or ethical virtue gives rise to something apart from it (1177b1–3). Military action is not just chosen for its own sake; it also aims at something else (1177b9–12), e.g., the defense of one's *polis*. Politically virtuous action also aims at something else – the happiness of others, if not also power and honor (1177b12–15). Thus, both of these sorts of action are desirable for something other than themselves (1177b17).³¹ By contrast, contemplation is said to aim at no end beyond itself (1177b19–20). Contemplation, thus, is final in a way that politically and ethically virtuous action is not.

(2) *N.E.* I says that the chief good is self-sufficient (1097b1–14 and section III above). *N.E.* x.6, 1176b5 echoes this point; and x.7 and x.8 go on to argue that self-sufficiency belongs most to contemplation.

In x.7 Aristotle grants that both a wise person and an ethically virtuous person need the necessities of life in order to exercise their respective virtues (1177a28–29). But a just person also needs other people in order to exercise justice; and a courageous person, a temperate person, and anyone who possesses any of the other ethical virtues needs something besides the necessities of life in order to exercise these virtues (1177a30–32). A wise man, however, can contemplate alone, even if he would contemplate better in the company of others (1177a27–b1).

x.8 also recognizes that someone who contemplates needs external goods. But he will need less of them than will someone who engages in politically or ethically virtuous activity (1178a24–28). A generous person needs money for generous actions; a just person needs money for the return of services; a courageous person needs power; and a temperate person needs opportunity (1178a28–33). Indeed, the greater and nobler the acts of ethical or political virtue, the more external goods will be needed. However, someone who contemplates needs no such extra goods (1178b1–5). Contemplation, thus, is more self-sufficient than is the exercise of political or ethical virtue.

³¹ Aristotle does seem to say here that acts of ethical or political virtue are not desired for their own sake (“*kai ou di autas airetai eisin*”). However, it is clear from elsewhere in the *N.E.* that he takes such acts to be desirable for their own sake. As a result, it seems better to take Aristotle to be saying here that acts of political or ethical virtue are not (simply) desired for their own sake, but are also desirable for something else. (See also section VII below.)

(3) *N.E.* 1.7 takes rational activity to be the *ergon* of human beings, concludes that *eudaimonia* is rational activity in accord with virtue, and if there is more than one such virtue, in accord with the best and most final virtue. Aristotle says in x.7 that it is reasonable to take *eudaimonia* to be activity in accord with the highest excellence, and so to be activity of the best thing in us, whether the latter is something divine or only the most divine thing in us (1177a11–16). He goes on to say that the theoretical intellect is the most divine and authoritative element in human beings, seeming to be each man himself, and something that more than anything else is man (1178a1–8). He also says that we should not listen to those who would say that a life devoted to this divine element is too high for human beings.

But we must not follow those who advise us, being men, to think of human things, and, being mortal of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us: for even if it be small in bulk, much more does it in power and worth surpass everything. This would seem, too, to be each man himself, since it is the authoritative and better part of him. It would be strange, then, if he were to choose not the life of himself but that of something else. (1177b31–1178a5)

Contemplation, thus, is the highest and best exercise of the kind of rational activity that is characteristic of human beings.

(4) In *N.E.* 1 Aristotle says that *eudaimonia* is pleasant, indeed the pleasantest of all human activities (1099a5–25). In *N.E.* x.6–7 he argues that contemplation is the pleasantest of human activities.

x.6 says that things are valuable and pleasant to the extent to which they are valuable and pleasant to a good man, and that what is most desirable to a good man is what is in accord with virtue (1176b25–28). x.7 says that the activity of wisdom is the pleasantest of virtuous activities (1177a23–24), going on to say that what is proper to each thing is by nature best and most pleasant. Since man is his intellect more than anything else, the life of the intellect is the best and most pleasant life (1178a5–7).

(5) *N.E.* x.7 adds a point not mentioned in *N.E.* 1 – that *eudaimonia* is found in leisurely activity – saying that we are busy for the sake of leisure and that we make war for the sake of peace (x.7, 1177b4–6).³² The exercise of virtue in political and military affairs, however, is not leisurely (1177b6–9, 15–17). Contemplation is leisurely (1177b19–21).

³² See also *Politics* vii.14, 1333a30–36 and vii.15, 1334a14–15.

(6) *N.E.* 1.9, 1099b15–18 says that *eudaimonia* is one of the most godlike of things. *N.E.* x.8 says that the gods are the happiest of beings and do not spend their time in politically or ethically virtuous activity. Since the activity of the gods that is most blessed is contemplation, the human activity most akin to it must be what most of all is *eudaimonia* (1178b9–23).

Summing up, contemplation is (i) desirable for its own sake in a way that politically or ethically virtuous activity is not, (ii) more self-sufficient than politically or ethically virtuous activity, (iii) the most pleasant of human activities, (iv) the virtuous exercise of the part of human beings which they are the most, (v) leisurely when acts of political and ethical virtue are not, and (vi) why the gods are the happiest of beings. Contemplation, thus, seems to be the central good, so that primary *eudaimonia* seems to be simply a life of contemplation. Indeed:

Happiness (*eudaimonia*) extends, then, just so far as contemplation does, and those to whom contemplation more fully belongs are more truly happy, not accidentally, but in virtue of the contemplation; for this is in itself precious. Happiness (*eudaimonia*), therefore, must be some form of contemplation. (x.8, 1178b28–32)

Still, there is a secondary form of *eudaimonia*, a life of political and ethical virtue (x.8, 1178a9–10). Politically and ethically virtuous action befits human nature (1178a10), belonging to our composite nature rather than to our intellect (1178a19–22). Because of this nature, a human being can't always engage in contemplation. Furthermore, to the extent to which a man lives with other people, he will (if he lives well) choose to do acts of ethical virtue (1178b5–7). Such a life is secondary *eudaimonia*.

VII

However, a closer look at x.6–8, together with what is said in *N.E.* 1 and elsewhere in the *N.E.*, shows that there are strong reasons to doubt that the foregoing is the right way to understand x.6–8. Rather than arguing that contemplation is the central good, x.6–8 argues that contemplation is activity in accord with the best and most final virtue.

(1) When Aristotle argues that contemplation is desirable for its own sake in a way in which acts of political or ethical virtue are not, he should not be taken to argue that acts of political or ethical virtue are not desirable for their own sake.³³ At *N.E.* 11.4, 1105a30–b1 Aristotle says that a virtuous person chooses virtuous actions for their own sake.

³³ See n.29.

Throughout his discussion of particular virtues in *N.E.* III–IV he takes it to be a mark of virtuous actions that they are done for the sake of the noble (*ta kalon*), i.e., for the sake of something desirable for its own sake and in a way that is noteworthy and warrants public praise or honor.³⁴ Since *N.E.* x recognizes that acts of political and ethical virtue are good and noble (e.g., at x.7, 1177b11–12), it seems best to say that here too Aristotle takes acts of political and ethical virtue to be desirable for their own sake.

When Aristotle says at 1177b17 that acts of political and ethical virtue are desirable for ends other than themselves, his point is that such actions also carry with them other specific ends – for example, the defense of one’s *polis*, or the happiness of others, or power or honor. Politically and ethically virtuous acts need not achieve these ends in order to be virtuous, but they are ends aimed at in these virtuous acts. By contrast, contemplation doesn’t carry with it any such additional ends.

Furthermore, in arguing that politically and ethically virtuous action aims at such other ends, Aristotle is not arguing that politically or ethically virtuous action aims at contemplation, something one might expect him to argue if he were arguing that contemplation is the central good. The ends tied to political and ethical virtue are such things as the defense of one’s *polis*, the happiness of others, or power or honor. None of these are instances of contemplation.³⁵

What Aristotle is arguing here is that contemplation is activity in accord with the most final virtue. According to *N.E.* I, an end desired for its own sake is final (*teleion*), and an end desired for its own sake and not for the sake of anything else is more final than an end desired for its own sake and for the sake of something else (I.7, 1097a30–34). Also, *eudaimonia* is rational activity in accord with virtue and if there is more than one virtue, then in accord with the best and most final (*teleiotatēn*) virtue (I.7, 1098a17–18). Since contemplation is not desired for any end other than itself (and *eudaimonia*), but acts of ethical or political virtue are desired for the sake of other specific ends, contemplation is more final than acts

³⁴ For an argument for this way of understanding *ta kalon*, see Richardson Lear (2004), Chapter 6.

³⁵ It is true that Richardson Lear (2004) argues that acts of ethical or political virtue aim at contemplation by approximating it. (See, e.g., Chapter 7, where she argues that acts of courage approximate contemplation.) However, in doing so she grants that contemplation is not an intentional object of (most) such acts. That Aristotle includes power and honor along with the happiness of others as ends of politically virtuous acts shows that in *N.E.* x.7 he is talking about intentional objects of ethically and politically virtuous action. His point here is not that acts of ethical and political virtue aim at contemplation.

of ethical or political virtue. Indeed, contemplation seems to be activity in accord with the most final virtue.

(2) The same thing can be said in connection with Aristotle's argument in *N.E.* x that contemplation is self-sufficient. According to *N.E.* I, what is self-sufficient is something which, given sufficient external goods, is enough to make a life desirable and lacking in nothing. But this is not what Aristotle calls attention to when he argues in *N.E.* x that contemplation is self-sufficient in a way that acts of political and ethical virtue are not. In *N.E.* x he argues that contemplation requires fewer external goods than do acts of political or ethical virtue.

In section III, I suggested that self-sufficiency admits of a threshold and so of degrees, so that a life significantly above the threshold of self-sufficiency will be more self-sufficient than a life at the threshold. Aristotle's argument in *N.E.* x shows another way in which self-sufficiency admits of degrees. An activity that requires fewer external goods than another activity is more self-sufficient than that other activity. Contemplation, thus, is more self-sufficient than are acts of political or ethical virtue. But this doesn't mean that politically and ethically virtuous activity isn't self-sufficient in the sense that given sufficient external goods it is enough to make a life desirable and lacking nothing. At most it means that a life that also includes contemplation has a better claim on being primary *eudaimonia* than does a life of political and ethical virtue without contemplation.

(3) Aristotle does say in x.7 that the intellect seems to be each man himself (1178a2–3), that it is more than anything man (1178a7–8), and that it would be strange if a person were to forgo contemplation and choose not the life of himself but the life of something else (1178b4–5). But at x.8, 1178a19–21 he also recognizes the composite nature of human beings. Furthermore, the fact that the intellect seems (or is thought [*doxei*]) to be each man himself doesn't mean that the intellect is each man himself. Nor does the intellect's being man more than anything mean that man isn't also something else. Indeed, at *N.E.* x.8, 1178a10 Aristotle recognizes that acts of political and ethical virtue befit human nature. More important, he says at *N.E.* VIII.7, 1159a5–11 that a friend won't wish his friend to be a god, for then the friend wouldn't remain the sort of being that he is, implying that a man is more than the divine element in him. Finally, as I argued in section IV above, the activity that is *idion* to human beings and so is their *ergon*, is practical and theoretical rational activity.

Thus, Aristotle should not be taken to argue in *N.E.* x that contemplation is the virtuous exercise of the rational activity that is characteristic of human beings, theoretical rational activity. Rather he is arguing that

contemplation is activity in accord with the most final virtue that can characterize the kind of rational activity that is characteristic of human beings, practical and theoretical activity. If one couples this with what I argued in connection with (1) and (2) above, it follows that *N.E.* x.6–8 argues that contemplation is activity in accord with the most final virtue.

(4)–(6) That contemplation is the pleasantest of activities, that it is most leisurely, and that it is what the happiness of the gods consists in fits nicely with this last conclusion. *N.E.* 1.7 says that *eudaimonia* is rational activity in accord with virtue and if there is more than one virtue, in accord with the best and most final virtue. The pleasantest and the most leisurely form of rational activity, and the rational activity that is most akin to what makes the gods happy and is virtuous activity of the best part of human beings, is rational activity in accord with the best virtue that can characterize rational activity.

Thus, *N.E.* x.6–8 should be taken to argue that contemplation is activity in accord with the best and most final virtue.

VIII

By itself, understanding *N.E.* x.6–8 in this way does not determine whether primary *eudaimonia* is simply a life of contemplation or a life of contemplation and ethical and political virtue. If one were to take the conclusion of the “function argument” in *N.E.* 1.7 to be that *eudaimonia* is simply rational activity in accord with the best and most final virtue, then taking *N.E.* x.6–8 to argue that contemplation is activity in accord with the best and most final virtue would still make primary *eudaimonia* simply a life of contemplation. However, if one adds this way of understanding x.6–8 to what I argued in sections III–V, as well as to the considerations that are given below, one has significant reason to conclude that in the *N.E.* primary *eudaimonia* is a life of contemplation and ethical and political virtue.

First, it will be helpful to make clear why a life of political and ethical virtue counts as a form of *eudaimonia*, and so can constitute a secondary form of *eudaimonia*.³⁶ Such a life is a form of *eudaimonia* because it

³⁶ Bush (2008), pp. 53–60, argues that the “dominant end” view faces the problem of explaining why a life of ethical and political virtue should count as a form of *eudaimonia*. If *eudaimonia* is simply a life of contemplation, how can a life that lacks contemplation be a form of *eudaimonia*? An analogous question arises for the view for which I have been arguing. If *eudaimonia* is a life of rational activity including activity in accord with the best and most final virtue, then how can a life which doesn’t include this latter activity be a form of *eudaimonia*?

is a life of rational activity in accord with virtue, and because it satisfies to a significant degree the conditions for *eudaimonia* set out in *N.E.* 1.7. Although acts of political and ethical virtue carry other specific ends with them and are sought for the sake of *eudaimonia*, they will not be sought for the sake of any other ends. As a result, a life of political and ethical virtue is relatively final. Since, given sufficient external goods, politically and ethically virtuous activity can make a life worth living and sufficiently satisfying to be called happy, a life of political and ethical virtue is self-sufficient, even if adding contemplation to that life would make it more self-sufficient. Because it is self-sufficient, a life of ethical and political virtue is also desirable and not to be counted as one good among others.

Among other things, this helps support a point Broadie makes – that a life of political and ethical virtue is the core of any form of *eudaimonia*.³⁷ Broadie points out that it is fairly obvious that a person can engage in contemplation during his life while failing to display ethical virtue. It is also hard to see how Aristotle could have been unaware of this. Since Aristotle doesn't mention this possibility when he talks about a life of contemplation, it seems reasonable to think that he is assuming that a person who engages in a life of contemplation will also exercise ethical virtue. Broadie then suggests that because of this Aristotle operates with a generic conception of *eudaimonia* that has ethically virtuous activity as its core. A life of contemplation together with political and ethical virtue turns out to be the best form of this generic form of *eudaimonia*, and so is the primary form of *eudaimonia*. A life of just political and ethical virtue is secondary *eudaimonia*. This way of understanding Aristotle in the *N.E.* receives support from the following three interrelated points.

First, at *Topics* 116b8–10 Aristotle distinguishes what is good without qualification (*agathon haplōs*) from what is good under the circumstances. Recovery from health is good without qualification, but a certain surgical procedure for a particular patient is good under the circumstances.³⁸ Given this distinction, there are occasions on which one's deliberation should be determined by what is good under the circumstances rather than by what is good without qualification.³⁹ Thus, even if contemplation is good without qualification, there can and will be occasions when one should act instead in accord with political or ethical virtue because

³⁷ See Broadie (2002), pp. 79–80. ³⁸ See also *E.E.* 1249a11–13.

³⁹ See also *N.E.* v.1, 1129b6, where Aristotle says that a man should pray that what is good without qualification is good for him, but should choose what is good for him. I take what is good for a man here to be what is good under the circumstances.

so acting is good under the circumstances. It seems natural to say that so acting would contribute towards one's life being worth living.

Second, *Politics* VII.9 says that various social roles should be served by the same people at different times of their lives – military service when a person is young, legislative service when the person has acquired wisdom, and service as priests when the person is old. Although contemplation is not mentioned in this discussion, one would expect that it too would best occur at a certain time of a person's life, if only because a person will need a considerable amount of education and experience before he can successfully engage in contemplation. Contemplation wouldn't then be pursued on every occasion on which it might be pursued. Even if Aristotle wouldn't relegate contemplation to a certain time of a person's life, one would still expect that it would be best engaged in at only certain times during a person's life. Not only is there a limit to how long a person can contemplate, someone who contemplates will need to be active in obtaining external goods that enable him to contemplate. Furthermore, if a person has friends with whom he contemplates, there will be occasions on which he should act for the sake of a friend rather than contemplate. Not only would it be good under the circumstances if he were to exercise ethical virtue on these occasions, it seems natural to say that his doing so would contribute to his life's being worth living.

Finally, this latter point helps answer a question that might be raised for the view for which I have been arguing.⁴⁰ If a life of ethical and political virtue without contemplation turns out to be a secondary form of *eudaimonia*, why won't a life of contemplation without ethical or political virtue also be a secondary form of *eudaimonia*? After all, each such life is a life in accord with a virtue of rational activity. The answer to this question runs as follows.

Since human beings can't continuously exercise contemplation in the course of their lives, it will take an exercise of the practical intellect to determine when, where, and how a person will contemplate. In order for this exercise of the practical intellect to be engaged in well, it must be an exercise of *phronēsis*, the supreme virtue of the practical intellect. With *phronēsis* comes ethical virtue⁴¹ and so the ability to determine what is good under the circumstances, including when it would be good to exercise ethical or political virtue rather than contemplate.⁴² If this exercise of

⁴⁰ It is a question that Richardson Lear (2004), pp. 196–97, raises for a similar view.

⁴¹ Cf. *N.E.* VI.12, 1144a36–37, and VII.2, 1146a7–9.

⁴² As Stephen Gardiner pointed out to me, this argument presupposes that *phronēsis* is not confined to instrumental reasoning but also grasps the ends human beings should aim at, including

the practical intellect is not engaged in well, then a life that involves this deficient exercise of the practical intellect would seem to exhibit sufficient failure to engage in rational activity in accord with virtue to disqualify it as a life of *eudaimonia*.⁴³

Thus, a life of contemplation without the exercise of ethical and political virtue will not be a secondary form of *eudaimonia*, and ethical and political virtue will be at the core of any form of *eudaimonia*. This in turn helps explain why in the *N.E.* Aristotle pays so much attention to ethical virtue.

We are now in a position to deal with the two passages in *N.E.* x that seem to provide the strongest support for thinking that primary *eudaimonia* is simply a life of contemplation: *N.E.* x.7, 1177b31–1178a5, where Aristotle says that we should strain every nerve to live in accord with the best thing in us; and *N.E.* x.8, 1178b28–32, where Aristotle says that *eudaimonia* extends as far as contemplation. These passages can now be understood as saying that we should strain every nerve to include contemplation in our lives so that we will live a life of primary *eudaimonia*, and that since any form of *eudaimonia* will include the exercise of ethical and political virtue, primary *eudaimonia* will extend as far as contemplation.

Summing up what has been argued so far, there is good reason to think that (i) the central good is a single, general end, (ii) the central good is self-sufficient because, given sufficient external goods, it makes a life containing it worth living and satisfying enough to be called happy, (iii) self-sufficiency admits of a threshold and so of degrees, (iv) given sufficient external goods, ethically and politically virtuous activity makes a life worth living and satisfying enough to be called happy, (v) the *ergon* of human beings is practical and theoretical rational activity, (vi) ethical virtue contributes to *eudaimonia* because the *ergon* of human beings is achieved only through the exercise of *phronēsis* and so with ethical virtue,

those that are worth pursuing under the circumstances. For a defense of this presupposition see Dahl (1984), Chapter 3, and (2009), section 11.

⁴³ Still, one might wonder how contemplation can be superior to the exercise of ethical and political virtue and yet a life of contemplation without ethical and political virtue can fail to be a secondary form of *eudaimonia*. The brief answer is as follows. Contemplation is superior to ethical and political virtue because it is rational activity in accord with the best and most final virtue. It is final in a way that the exercise of ethical and political virtue is not; it is more self-sufficient than the exercise of ethical and political virtue, etc. Nevertheless, a life devoted simply to contemplation fails to be a secondary form of *eudaimonia*, because *eudaimonia* is the human good and the human good is what is good under the circumstances of human life, where what is good under the circumstances of human life can't be achieved without *phronēsis*. Since with *phronēsis* comes ethical (and political) virtue, a life of contemplation without ethical and political virtue won't be good under the circumstances of human life.

(vii) *N.E.* x.6–8 argues that contemplation is activity in accord with the best and most final virtue, not that contemplation is the central good, and (viii) ethically and politically virtuous activity is part of any form of *eudaimonia*. As a result, one has significant reason to conclude that in the *N.E.* the central good is rational activity in accord with virtue including activity in accord with the best and most final virtue, that primary *eudaimonia* is a life of contemplation and political and ethical virtue, and that secondary *eudaimonia* is simply a life of political and ethical virtue.

IX

Still, if there are occasions in a life of primary *eudaimonia* when it will be best to exercise political or ethical virtue rather than contemplate, how is one to determine when these occasions occur? Indeed, how are apparent conflicts between contemplation and political or ethical virtue to be resolved? If one can't answer these questions, one still won't have any assurance that a life of contemplation and ethical and political virtue won't unduly sacrifice political or ethical virtue for the sake of contemplation.

Apparent conflicts between contemplation and political or ethical virtue are to be resolved in the same way that apparent conflicts between ethical virtues are to be resolved – through an exercise of *phronēsis*.

Aristotle says of *phronēsis* in *N.E.* vi:

But again it is not *supreme* over wisdom, i.e., over the superior part of us, any more than the art of medicine is over health; for it does not use it but provides for its coming into being; it issues orders, then, for its sake, but not to it. Further, to maintain its supremacy would be like saying that the art of politics rules the gods because it issues orders about all the affairs of the state. (1145a7–11)

Although his main point here is that *phronēsis* determines what to do so that the exercise of wisdom (contemplation) can occur, what determines when and how contemplation should occur will also determine when and how something else should occur instead.

Still, one might ask, what is the basis for such a determination? On what grounds would one decide on a given occasion whether to contemplate or to exercise political or ethical virtue? The answer is the same as the answer *N.E.* vi gives to the question of how to determine the mean on a given occasion.

Not much can be said in advance about how to determine such a mean because its determination rests on particular features of the situation, features whose relevance and weight are grasped by a kind of perception

that is based on experience.⁴⁴ This is not to say that one can't support such a determination by means of reasons. It is just that these reasons will depend on features of the particular situation. They are genuine reasons because they will be acknowledged as such by people of good will and sufficient experience.⁴⁵ But what makes them reasons is still tied to the particular situation.⁴⁶

The same thing can be said about how to resolve apparent conflicts between contemplation and political or ethical virtue. The decision will be about what is good under the circumstances, something that will depend on particular features of the situation whose relevance and weight are to be determined by a perception based on experience.

Granted this doesn't provide any advance assurance that a person who lives a life of contemplation and political and ethical virtue won't unduly sacrifice political or ethical virtue for the sake of contemplation. But if the foregoing account of how apparent conflicts between various kinds of virtues are to be resolved is correct, no such assurance will be possible.

X

Finally, it might be objected that on the interpretation for which I have argued, contemplation ends up being sought for its own sake and for the sake of something else, a life of *eudaimonia*. Not only does Aristotle never say this in the *N.E.*, it is not something he would grant.

However, as I indicated near the beginning of this chapter, Aristotle is committed to a distinction between *eudaimonia* as a life devoted to a certain good, and the good to which such a life is devoted, a good I called the central good. I pointed out that a consequence of this distinction is that the central good will be sought for the sake of *eudaimonia*. That contemplation is sought for the sake of a life of *eudaimonia* is a conclusion one will have to accept even if one takes contemplation to be the central good and primary *eudaimonia* to be simply a life of contemplation. As a result, it poses no special problem for the interpretation for which I have been arguing.

⁴⁴ See *N.E.* II.9, II09b20–21, *N.E.* IV.5, II26b2–5, and *N.E.* VI.11, II43b11–14.

⁴⁵ What I have in mind here occurs in biomedical ethics committees when members of the committee reach a consensus about a given case, not because it is the best compromise they can expect given their different ethical backgrounds, but because in spite of their different backgrounds they agree on what the relevant features of the particular case are, and the decision that these features support.

⁴⁶ For an argument that what I have said here is the upshot of what *N.E.* VI says about how to determine the mean, see Peterson (1988).

I conclude that there are significant reasons for accepting the view that in the *N.E.* *eudaimonia* is a life of rational activity in accord with virtue including the best and most final virtue, that *N.E.* x.6–8 argues that contemplation is activity in accord with the best and most final virtue, so that primary *eudaimonia* is a life of contemplation and political and ethical virtue and secondary *eudaimonia* is a life of just political and ethical virtue.

So understood, *N.E.* x.6–8 doesn't exhibit a surprising break with the rest of the *N.E.* It fills out and fits the rest of the *N.E.* quite well.

CHAPTER 4

Aristotle on eudaimonia, nous, and divinity

A. A. Long

No work in the ancient philosophy corpus has generated more scholarly discussion in recent years than Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (*N.E.*), and no issue that it raises has been more controversial than Aristotle's position(s) throughout the work concerning the ultimate human good, which he consistently identifies with *eudaimonia* (conventionally translated as "happiness").¹ Debate has chiefly centered on the question whether Aristotle represents *eudaimonia* as comprising a plurality of intrinsically choiceworthy goods ("inclusive" end) – meaning either a set of virtuous activities or this plus various intrinsic goods such as pleasure and friends – or whether, instead, he envisions it to be a unitary goal ("dominant" end) consisting strictly in just one supremely excellent thing, more specifically, a *single* kind of virtuous activity. It is widely agreed that his preliminary discussion of *eudaimonia* in Book I of *N.E.* is couched in terms that are too general or too ambiguous to settle the question decisively, though they tend, in my view, to favor the "inclusive" alternative. However, in Book X Aristotle states unequivocally that the happiest life consists in the exercise of intellectual virtue or contemplation (*theoria*), while the political life of moral virtue (which he has been exclusively treating throughout Books II–V and VII–IX) is happiest only "secondarily" (*N.E.* x.7–8, 1178a6–10). A page or two later he writes (1178b28–32):²

Happiness extends, then, just so far as contemplation does, and those to whom contemplation more fully belongs are more truly happy, not incidentally but in

In finalizing this paper, I have benefited from comments by Sarah Broadie and Zina Giannopoulou.

¹ Contributions to this issue from the last two decades include (selectively) Kraut (1989); Curzer (1990); White (1990); Broadie (1991) and (2002); Kenny (1993); Crisp (1992) and (1994); Purinton (1998); Charles (1999); Scott (1999); Sedley (1999); Cooper (1999c) and (2004b); Richardson Lear (2004); Lawrence (2006); Van Cleemput (2006); and Heinaman (2007).

² Unless otherwise indicated, I draw on the translation by Ross (= Aristotle [1925]) with minor modifications.

virtue of the contemplation; for this in itself is precious. Happiness therefore must be some kind of contemplation (*theoria tis*).

Taken just by themselves, these passages, especially the last one quoted, undoubtedly favor the “dominant end” interpretation.

In that case, though, how does Aristotle intend his readers to evaluate the life of moral virtue, to which he has devoted so much careful attention in the earlier books of *N.E.*? Is he really and finally asking them to take courage, justice, temperance, and so forth to pertain to a life that is happiest only *secondarily* (x.8, 1178a9), and its corresponding activities to be “not choiceworthy for their own sake” (x.7, 1177b18)?³ Can activity in accordance with these virtues be plausibly understood as an “analogue” to contemplation, or an “approximation” of it, or instrumentally contributory to it?⁴ Much subtle argument has been devoted to such proposals, but even their supporters must acknowledge that they have little or no explicit foundation in Aristotle’s text.

Early in the first book, he already distinguishes between the political and the contemplative lives (1095b18–19), but he defers treatment of the latter (1096a4–5). Right at the beginning of that book he declares that politics is the “most authoritative” or “master” art, meaning that it includes the ends of all other sciences, and so “its end must be the human good” (1094a26–b7).⁵ Some pages later, Aristotle concludes that happiness or the human good is “activity of soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete” (1098a16–18).

Those who support the “dominant end” interpretation take “best and most complete virtue” to be a cryptic allusion to “wisdom” (*sophia*), which is the virtue corresponding to contemplation according to *N.E.* vi.6, 1141a16–20. But it is quite possible, and indeed more plausible, given the “political” tenor of the argument thus far, to interpret the expression inclusively, signifying “total virtue, the combination of all virtues,” interpreting that to include both the (as yet) unidentified and undefined moral virtues and their intellectual counterparts.⁶ However, my objective in this chapter is not to elucidate Aristotelian *eudaimonia* by advocating *either*

³ These questions become still more difficult if “secondarily” (*deuteros*) is detached from “happiest” (*eudaimonestatos*) in the previous line, as by such translators as Ross: “But in a secondary degree the life in accordance with the other virtue is happy.”

⁴ See Charles (1999); Richardson Lear (2004); and Kraut (1989).

⁵ This claim can, by a stretch, accommodate contemplation (as theoretical science), but it certainly does not anticipate the secondary status finally accorded to the happiness constituted by the virtues of the political life, the subject to which he returns in the final pages of Book x.

⁶ See Ackrill (1980), pp. 28–29.

an inclusive *or* dominant interpretation of such controversial expressions as “best and most complete virtue.” That disjunction dividing interpreters has largely outlived whatever value it initially had. Its prevalence in discussions of Aristotle’s ethics threatens to reduce study of *N.E.* to a virtual chess game, where the legitimate moves are tantamount to ingenious readings of a few ambiguous expressions (such as “best and most complete virtue”). As long as discussion of Aristotle’s stance is restricted to such moves, it is all too easy for the defending side in this protracted debate to declare stalemate.

It could be, of course, that every effort to achieve a satisfyingly unitary interpretation of the *N.E.* as a whole is doomed to fail because the work as we have it is a compilation by Aristotle’s editors rather than a fully integrated opus sanctioned in this form by the author himself. If that were so, the chapters that seem to treat contemplative activity as the necessary and sufficient condition for perfect happiness could be regarded as a Platonizing appendix, recalling the early *Protrepticus*, and out of place in a work that deals so carefully and systematically with morally virtuous activity.⁷ The three central books of *N.E.* (v–vii) that it shares with books iv–vi of the probably earlier *Eudemian Ethics* virtually prove that post-Aristotelian editors are ultimately responsible for the transmitted text of both ethical works.

Still, such an explanation for the difficulties we have in crediting Aristotle with a fully coherent account of happiness in *N.E.* should be only a last resort; and indeed there are many indications, as one reads through the whole work, that it is intended to constitute a unity, notwithstanding loose ends such as the absence in the body of the work of an earlier statement (as claimed at x.7, 1177a17) to the effect that “perfect” (or “complete”) happiness is “contemplative.”

My aim in this chapter is to see what progress we may make in interpreting Aristotelian *eudaimonia* by reviewing the term’s associations with divinity and with *nous*. In his treatment of contemplation Aristotle emphasizes the *godlikeness* of such activity for human beings:

The activity of god, which surpasses all others in blessedness, must be contemplative; and of human activities, therefore, that which is most akin to this must be most of the nature of happiness. (*N.E.* x.8, 1178b21–23)

This sentence and its surrounding context have given rise to the widespread belief that Aristotle introduces divinity specifically to characterize

⁷ See Gauthier and Jolif (1970), II.2, pp. 875–78.

contemplative happiness and to distinguish it accordingly from the secondary happiness of moral virtue. In fact, however, divinity is also a prominent concept in the later sections of the first book of *N.E.*, where, as we have seen, Aristotle draws no overt distinction between moral and intellectual virtue. These early mentions of divinity have played little part so far in the “inclusive” vs. “dominant” debate. I propose to argue, on the basis of these passages and some comparative material, that all *eudaimonia*, for Aristotle, is a blessed (*makarios*) condition, and as such, quasi-divine or “godlike.” If this is correct, it will not have the effect of making contemplative excellence the standard for judging the lesser value of morally virtuous activity or for seeing the latter as an approximation or instrument thereto. Rather, it will suggest that there are two complementary routes to happiness and the godlike condition that all authentic happiness involves. One route, constituted by the exercise of practical reason, morally virtuous activity, and adequate provision of external goods, is the specifically human way to achieve a godlike condition. The other route, constituted entirely by excellent contemplative activity, temporarily transcends ordinary human identity and is thus (unlike the other route) directly imitative of divinity (which involves nothing directly analogous to *phronesis* and moral virtue).⁸ Before I concentrate on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, it will be helpful to my argument if I step back and briefly situate the work in two larger contexts – first, divinity’s relation to *eudaimonia* in the mainstream Greek philosophical tradition; and second, Aristotle’s ideas elsewhere concerning the relation of human identity to *nous* and divinity.

DIVINITY AND HAPPINESS IN THE GREEK PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITION

“Likeness to god” is Plato’s repeated expression in his later dialogues for a mental disposition ruled by reason, and virtuous accordingly.⁹ Most eloquently and fully, Plato’s *Timaeus* proposes that we should think of our rational faculty as a divine spirit (*daimon*), by ministering to which we may think divine thoughts, and immortalize ourselves to the greatest

⁸ This proposal has most in common with ideas developed by Broadie (1991) and (2002) and Hare (2007).

⁹ *Theaetetus* 176a5–c3; *Republic* 10.613a–b; *Phaedrus* 252c–253c; *Timaeus* 90a–d. In the first two of these passages godlikeness explicitly involves justice, and in *Timaeus* 41c the demiurge connects the proper rule of reason and consequential immortality with consistent adherence to that virtue.

extent possible. The requisite ministrations include subordination of our non-rational faculties, and the study of astronomy as the means of conforming our mental motions to those of the divine world soul. Plato exploits the etymology of *eudaimonia* by having *Timaeus* say that the route to supreme happiness is keeping one's *daimon* or intellect (the faculty conferred on human souls by the demiurge himself) in the best condition of which it is capable.

Book x.7 of *N.E.* emphatically recalls this striking Platonic passage in many ways.¹⁰ First, Aristotle follows Plato in proposing that supreme *eudaimonia* requires the excellent activity of one's best or highest mental capacity. Second, like Plato, he identifies the best activity of that capacity with intellectual thought as distinct, it may seem, from the domain of ethical virtue. Third, he agrees with Plato that intellectual activity is something divine or godlike, a doctrine he underlines by implying an etymological connection between *theios* and *theoria* (e.g., 1177a15–18). Fourth, he echoes Plato's ideal of godlikeness by recommending us, human though we are, to transcend our ordinary humanity by living the contemplative life of *nous*. Finally, to the extent that we do that, we “immortalize ourselves to the greatest extent possible” (1177b33) and achieve a life that is supremely *eudaimon*.

On the evidence of these two passages, we can be confident that Greek philosophers took the term *eudaimonia*, as its etymology implies, to register an essential connection with divinity.¹¹ Most literally the word signifies a god-favored, and hence a supremely prosperous or happy, life. How better to assure such prosperity or happiness than by making oneself as like to divinity as possible? Subsequent to Plato and Aristotle, we find Epicurus saying that a perfected Epicurean will live like a god among men; and his followers revered Epicurus himself as a god, viewing him as both a paradigm of *eudaimonia* and wisdom and as a savior.¹² In

¹⁰ See Sedley (1999) for a full discussion of the links between the two contexts. He is undoubtedly right to argue that Aristotle in *N.E.* x.7 strongly reflects the influence of the *Timaeus* passage. However, Sedley's thesis is more ambitious; he proposes that “the main structure of Aristotle's ethics reflects this same passage” (p. 324), by which Sedley means the elevation of the contemplative life over the life of ethical virtue. In order for that to be correct, we need to interpret Plato's ideal of godlikeness in the *Timaeus* as that of “a pure intellect directly contemplating eternal truths” (p. 325). While that is a possible reading of *Tim.* 90a–c, it does not fit well with Plato's general understanding of the human condition in the dialogue, especially 41c (see n.9 above).

¹¹ See Broadie (1991), p. 30: “Etymology points to the notion of a favourable divinity steering a person's destiny.” I elaborate this point in Long (2004), pp. 126–28, which I draw on in this and the next paragraph.

¹² *Letter to Menoeceus* 135 and Lucretius 5, 1–12.

Stoicism the ideal sage enjoys a happiness that does not differ from that of divinity.¹³ Epictetus tells his students that Zeus made human beings with a view to their *eudaimonia* (III.24.2). He also tells them that, in virtue of their rational faculty, they are carrying god around in themselves, an endowment that registers their status as “children” of god (I.3.1).

The common ground I have just surveyed does not imply that these four philosophical schools specified the same conditions in order for *eudaimonia* to be achieved, and we know, of course, that they did not. What the congruity may (and, I think, does) suggest is that philosophical *eudaimonia*, whatever are taken to be its detailed conditions, is presumed *without argument* to be a godlike or quasi-divine existence. The presumption does not need argument because this connotation of the word is a cultural datum.

Can this finding, however, be right in the case of Aristotle? To be sure, it fits his account of contemplative happiness perfectly. “Of human activities, what is most *akin* to this [divine contemplation] must be most productive of happiness” (II78b22–23). One reading of this sentence (a prevalent one) is that godlikeness, as signified by human contemplative activity, is precisely what differentiates the happiness constituted by *theoria* from the secondary happiness of moral virtue. It is this presumed rift between the two types of happiness that has generated so much of the chess-game style of interpreting the *N.E.* of which I complained above. Before settling for the rift, however, we need to take stock of the fact that Aristotle in *N.E.* x.7–8 repeatedly ascribes a comparative range to *eudaimonia*. Thus, as in the passage just cited, the point being made pertains to “what is *most productive* of happiness.” A few lines later “the life of the mind” makes a human being “happiest” (II78a20). The contemplative life yields “perfect” or “complete” happiness (II77a17, b7, b24). And the one who cultivates *nous* is “*most dear* to the gods” (II79a24) and “*especially happy*” (II79a32). As to the gods themselves “we have assumed that they are *especially* blessed and happy” (II78b8–9). Just as there are degrees of happiness, there are also, for Aristotle, degrees of “divinity.” *Eudaimonia*, he declares, is “one of the most divine things” (*N.E.* I, 1099b16), and “more divine” than justice (II01b27). These last two passages, let it be noted, are from his introduction (Book I).

My conclusion from this survey of instances is that the godlikeness and happiness human beings can achieve by engaging in contemplative activity is quite compatible with their achieving a lesser degree of godlikeness

¹³ Stobaeus, *Ecl.* II.98, 17 (*Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* III.54).

and happiness through performing morally excellent activities. For sure, the gods do not engage in such actions (1178b10–18). But it does not follow from the gods' exclusively intellectual excellence that the happiness human beings achieve by morally virtuous activities has nothing godlike about it. In achieving happiness thereby, there should be something godlike about their condition, given the general sense of *eudaimonia* and Aristotle's understanding of the term.

Sarah Broadie in fact has argued that we should view the two forms of happiness as linked by their resemblance to divine happiness.¹⁴

In stating that there are two forms of happiness, Aristotle is committed on general logical grounds to the assumption that one and only one of them [i.e., the theoretical form] constitutes the primary sense of the word, while the other constitutes a derivative sense dependent on some relation to the first. Otherwise, "happiness" used of both is simply an equivocation, and there will be no unitary chief good and goal of political expertise.

And, after a few sentences that I omit, she continues:

Resemblance is the key to the fact that both are forms of happiness ... In fact, according to Aristotle's clinching argument, the respect in which we should be comparing the political and theoretical ideals is the degree to which they approximate the life of gods, the paradigms of happiness. If we apply traditional ideas of the gods (as deploying or as somehow present in elemental physical forces, "rulers of land and sea",¹⁵ and also as great interferers in human affairs), then one result follows; but if these notions are set aside in favour of a more rational conception of the divine life as wholly independent of physical and social environment, then purely reflective activity emerges as closer in nature to the divine activity than any other human phenomenon. The political form of the human chief good is thus secondary to the reflective, since both resemble the perfect divine paradigm¹⁶ (and therefore each other) enough to count as happiness, but the former lags behind the latter in this respect.

I find Broadie's proposal, as quoted here, extremely helpful. Further argument, however, is needed if we are to follow her lead in the interests of crediting Aristotle's overall project in *N.E.* with as much unity and coherence as possible. Having outlined my general support for the position she adopts, I will now try to strengthen and refine it.

¹⁴ Broadie (2002), pp. 77–78. See also Richardson Lear (2004), pp. 193–94, on the "resemblance" claim. I applaud much of her analysis, but I shall question (below) whether she is right to locate the resemblance in the way "the excellent use of practical reason resembles wise human theoretical reasoning." Similarly Cooper (1999c), p. 235.

¹⁵ Broadie refers to *N.E.* x.8, 1179a4, where the phrase applies to human rulers.

¹⁶ Broadie compares *N.E.* 1.2, 1094b9–10, where, as she notes (p. 91n.414), "it is 'finer and more godlike' to bring about the chief good 'for a nation or for cities' than for one individual."

HUMAN IDENTITY, *NOUS*, AND DIVINITY

Divinity is a concept that helps to underwrite several of Aristotle's principal doctrines including, but by no means confined to, the contemplative activity of *nous* and the supreme bliss of a life devoted to such activity exclusively and eternally.¹⁷ Divinity is the domain of celestial physics with its necessary truths and imperishable substances, moving in everlasting circles because of their desire to emulate the self-directed intellectual activity of the prime unmoved mover. As such, divinity marks the boundary between the existentially changeless region of the heavens and the sublunary world of natural change. That boundary, however, is by no means absolute. *Nous*, or at least its active aspect as the agent of thought, is mysteriously at work in both domains. The prime unmoved mover is *nous*, and *nous* is intermittently active in us, furnishing us with "something divine, or what is most divine in us" (*N.E.* x.7, 1177a15–16).

Thanks to this endowment, human beings have a unique status in the animal world. But is our species unique in partaking of divinity to any extent at all? Aristotle keeps his options open. "Of all living beings with which we are acquainted man alone partakes of the divine, or at any rate partakes of it in a fuller measure than the rest" (*Part. an.* 11.10, 656a8–9).¹⁸ "Of all animals man alone stands erect, in accordance with his godlike (*theia*) nature and substance. For it is the function of the *most* godlike (*theiotaton*) to think (*noein*) and be wise (*phronein*)" (*Part. an.* 11.10, 686a26–28). In virtue of our *nous* and capacity for contemplation, we are the only creature capable of *eudaimonia* (*N.E.* x.8, 1178b24). Yet, "All things have by nature something divine in them" (*N.E.* 11.13, 1153b32).¹⁹ As to godlike men, they are very rare (*N.E.* 11.1, 1145a27); so much so, that asking one man to rule is tantamount to enthroning a beast (something driven by appetite), whereas the rule of dispassionate law may be seen as the rule of "god and *nous*" (*Pol.* 11.16, 1287a28–29).

Reflection on such passages reminds us of the immense gap separating theology in ancient Greece from that of the more recent monotheistic religions. Divinity was an extremely important and contentious concept for Platonists, Epicureans, Stoics, and Aristotelians. What they could

¹⁷ Hare (2007), pp. 12–51, provides excellent orientation on the theological dimension of Aristotle's ethics. He is particularly good at disarming mentions of the divine that have "been troublesome to some of his [i.e., Aristotle's] twentieth-century interpreters."

¹⁸ The context is about grades of life and vital functions, with man instanced as the animal who above all others possesses "life of high degree."

¹⁹ Suggesting that all creatures are alike in taking pleasure in reproduction as their way of "participating in the eternal and divine" (*De An.* 11.4, 415a24–b1).

chiefly agree on was semantic rather than substantive, taking god(s) to be the signifier of what each school deemed, in its different ways, to be the best life to which a human being could ideally aspire. There were no supposed facts, whether based on revelation or tradition, appeal to which could settle theological controversies or validate one's own theological stance. Students are regularly disconcerted by the fluidity of singular and plural in the philosophers' references to divinity.

Given Greece's polytheistic religious tradition and the absence of any authoritative scripture or divinely mandated rules for conduct, we should not be overly troubled by Aristotle's superficially inconsistent and, as often, rather vague references to divinity.²⁰ What chiefly matters to him, and should matter to us as his interpreters, is his conviction, on the one hand, that "there are things much more divine in their nature even than man" (*N.E.* vi.7, 1141b1), and, on the other hand, his doctrine that "man is preeminently (or predominantly) *nous*"; and therefore, by virtue of *nous*, what is best and most important in us is "something" divine (*N.E.* x.7, 1178a7). A classic way of making Aristotle's point would state that the constituents of the world are made up of, or rather themselves comprise, a vertical scale of value (*to timion*). Divinity (eternal and unembodied life of the mind) tops the scale. Hence our human rank, embodied beings that we are, is necessarily lower. Yet we are potentially closer to the top than anything other than an actual god, owing to our affinity to the divine in the potentially excellent activity of our *nous*.

Such discourse will continue to irritate those of Aristotle's readers who find any talk of divinity virtually meaningless or who seek in vain for complete clarity in the analysis of contemplation and the divine life that it encompasses. If we ask why Aristotle is so imprecise concerning the best and happiest life, the most obvious answer is the one he gives at *N.E.* x.7, 1177b26:

Such a life would be too high for man; for it is not in so far as he is a man that he will live so, but in so far as something divine is present in him ... If *nous* is divine, then, in comparison with man, the life according to it is divine in comparison with human life.

This passage is so familiar that we have become accustomed to reading it with little attention paid to the extraordinary paradox it asserts. Taken literally, Aristotle claims that human beings have a composite nature, the best part of which is not human but divine. We may try to make the

²⁰ Cf. Hare (2007), p. 19: "Aristotle gets tentative when he starts talking about God."

paradox more tractable by interpreting it as Aristotle's way of stating that human beings as a species are equipped with a faculty that can enable them intermittently to *transcend* their quotidian activities as living bodies and live *as if* they were pure intellects.²¹ In his more sober expressions of this ideal, Aristotle recognizes this "as if" condition, as when, after saying that happiness must be "some form of contemplation" (*N.E.* x.8, 1178b33), he immediately pulls back, and says:

But, being human, one will also need external prosperity; for our nature is not self-sufficient for contemplation, but our body must also be healthy and must have food and other attention.

Having now surveyed uses to which Aristotle applies theological language in characterizing what human beings are and what they are not, I turn now to look in detail at his references to *nous* and divinity in Book I of *N.E.*

DIVINITY AND *NOUS* IN BOOK I OF *N.E.*

The first passage that calls for discussion occurs in Aristotle's criticism of the Platonic Form of the Good. As the basis for rejecting a univocal and universally applicable use of "good," Aristotle cites his own doctrine of *categories* to show how "good" is predicated:

Good is spoken of in as many ways as being is spoken of. For it is spoken of in [the category of] substance [literally "what"], as god and *nous*; in quality, as the virtues; in quantity, as the moderate; and in relative, as the useful; in time, as the opportune moment; and in place, as the right location and so forth. (*N.E.* 1.6, 1096b19–27)²²

Scholars generally treat this passage as a sort of footnote, unrelated to Aristotle's main argument concerning the human good. I too had been of that company until I studied the following observation by Broadie:²³

If we lean on the obscure passage just quoted, it seems that "God" and "intelligence" refer to the central human good. Are they then names of the same thing? And what can it mean to say that the central human good is God. Aristotle

²¹ Cf. Nagel (1980), p. 13: "Men are not simply the most complex of animals but possess as their essential nature a capacity to transcend themselves and become like gods"; Hare (2007), p. 27: "The structural point about theological language is that Aristotle consistently uses it to get leverage up to something that is human but not merely human."

²² Translation based on that of Broadie (1991), p. 29.

²³ Broadie (1991), p. 29. I thank John Hare for first bringing Broadie's observation to my notice. In Hare (2007), pp. 20–27, he connects the reference to "god and *nous*" with Aristotle's doctrine of substance.

holds that mind is something divine or godlike, and that our highest good is the activity of intelligence. But that this is his position does not become clear until we reach the end of the *Ethics*.

Actually, as we have seen in my survey of Aristotle's remarks on human identity and divinity, *N.E.* x's doctrine, to which Broadie alludes, will not have surprised those of Aristotle's ancient readers who knew his entire corpus, especially the early *Protrepticus*, where he wrote: "Intelligence is the god in us – whether it was Hermetimus or Anaxagoras who said so."²⁴ Broadie is suitably cautious in advancing her interpretation of the passage on "good" and categories. She could, however, have invoked in its support our most authoritative commentators on *N.E.*, who refer to passages in Book IX (i.e., contexts before Aristotle identifies contemplative life as the highest form of happiness) concerning *nous* as a human being's essence.²⁵ "God and *nous*" is a virtual hendiadys in Aristotle (see above). To confirm this expression's reference in Book I to the substance or essence of human beings, we need look no further than the succeeding lines (cited above), where quality, quantity, and so forth are all illustrated by terms that pertain to human beings specifically – virtue, moderate, useful.

The students who first heard Aristotle's Nicomachean lectures could have picked up this implicit reference to a human being's divinely intellectual essence. Very likely they had already been instructed in his *categories*. Here, though, I claim no more for Broadie's subtle interpretation of this passage than its anticipation of subsequent references to god and *nous* in *N.E.* The passage is, however, an important step in my argument. Book x will repeatedly emphasize that the most divine and most happiness-producing activity of *nous* is contemplation. The argument I propose to develop is that all virtuous activities of *nous* are productive of some degree of happiness because they, and not exclusively contemplation, involve the exercise of our divine essence. If the divine life is the standard reference and paradigm of happiness, and happiness is essentially the virtuous

²⁴ Fr. B110 Düring. For its authenticity, see Hutchinson and Johnson (2005), p. 256.

²⁵ Gauthier and Jolif (1970), II.1, p. 40, where the French commentators note: "Si nous disons que le bien de Coriscos, c'est le dieu qui est en lui, c'est-à-dire l'intellect ... nous désignons son essence." And in support they cite the reference to the *Protrepticus* I have quoted above, and also *N.E.* IX.4, 1166a16–17 ("for the sake of the intellectual element in [man], which is thought to be the man himself"), *N.E.* IX.4, 1166a22–23 ("the element that thinks would seem to be the individual man, or to be so more than any other element in him"), and IX.8, 1168b35, or better 1169a2 ("that this [i.e., *nous*] is the man himself, then, or is so more than anything else, is plain"), as well as the more familiar statement at *N.E.* X.7, 1178a2 ("*nous* would seem to be each man himself, since it is the authoritative and better part of him").

activity of *nous*, should it not be the case that happiness is predicable of all virtuous activity of *nous*, whether that activity is engaged in contemplation or practical reasoning?

"We always choose happiness for its own sake and never for the sake of something else" (*N.E.* 1.5, 1097b1). Aristotle immediately clarifies the unique status here ascribed to *eudaimonia* by instancing the following items – honor, pleasure, *nous*, and every virtue – as things we choose both for their own sake "and for the sake of happiness, supposing that through them as means we shall be happy."²⁶ In this context Aristotle is reporting what he takes to be standard opinions as distinct from his own special claims. Even so, we should notice the status accorded to *nous* as good *both* in itself *and* for the sake of happiness. At this stage of his argument Aristotle is not interested in distinguishing between theoretical and practical applications of *nous*. I take that to be equally true when, by eliminating lower life activities, he arrives, in his argument concerning the human function, at "an active life of the [psychological] element that has a rational principle" (1098a3–4).²⁷ The upshot of the function argument, as I understand it, is to posit reasoning well or virtuous rational activity (i.e., activity of *nous*) as the ultimate end of any happy life, whether this activity is exercised through contemplation or through political service or through both.²⁸

Besides "unqualified completeness" (1097a30) – i.e., always chosen for its own sake and never for the sake of anything else – Aristotle advances three further characterizations of *eudaimonia* now glossed as "the complete" (or "perfect") good: (2) self-sufficiency (1097b7–8); (3) virtuous rational activity, as shown in the function argument (1098a7–15), either understood singly, or, if multiply, as "the best and most complete" of such activities (1098a17–18); and (4) complete life (1098a18–19). Having posited these four criteria as an "outline sketch of the human good," Aristotle proceeds to seek confirmation for their appropriateness from what people, especially philosophers, say or have said about *eudaimonia* (1098b9ff.). His account, he says, fits the following viewpoints: its making happiness a *good of the soul* (as distinct from something external or pertaining to body and soul jointly), and, as such, an *activity*; its fitting what one expects of *living* and *doing well*; its accommodating virtue (*arete*), practical wisdom

²⁶ As Gauthier and Jolif (1970), II.1, p. 40, note, honor, pleasure, and *nous* refer back to the three types of life – hedonistic, political, and contemplative (1095b17–1096a4).

²⁷ Cf. Gauthier and Jolif (1970), II.1, p. 40: "La vie 'active' inclut aussi bien la contemplation que l'action."

²⁸ So too Kraut (1989), p. 60.

(*phronesis*), and philosophical wisdom (*sophia*), and, in addition, pleasure and external prosperity.²⁹

In what follows (*N.E.* 1098b30–1099b8) Aristotle repeats his earlier insistence that the virtue happiness requires must be actively engaged (as distinct from being merely a disposition), and he gives detailed justification for including, in the full specification of happiness, pleasure and adequate external goods. He says nothing further in Book I about *phronesis* and *sophia*. We cannot be certain, unfortunately, whether he intends his readers to distinguish these two intellectual virtues as respectively “practical” and “theoretical”, according to the position he will later adopt in Book X, or whether instead, he cites them as virtually synonymous, as they often are in Plato and in Aristotle’s own *Protrepticus*. Either way, however, the claim that his account of happiness attends to them seems to me decisive support for an “inclusive,” rather than “dominant,” interpretation of the human good, as proposed at this early stage of the analysis.³⁰ We can best interpret the way he takes himself to have accommodated *phronesis* and *sophia* by saying that his account of happiness takes in all the virtuous activities of human *nous*.

By the time Aristotle reaches the end of *N.E.* 1.8, he has enumerated and justified the following seven attributes of *eudaimonia*: (1) completeness/ultimate end/never chosen for the sake of something else; (2) self-sufficiency; (3) virtuous activity (or activities) of reason; (4) completeness of life; (5) best and finest of things (*ariston*, *kalliston*, 1098a22–32); (6) pleasantness; and (7) adequate provision of external goods. Without as yet offering any detailed analysis or account of virtue(s) as such, he has indicated that the account of happiness he is advancing is in line with traditional viewpoints that make reference to *arete* (seemingly covering such classic virtues as justice and courage) and philosophical specifications that include the intellectual excellences (undefined) of *phronesis* and *sophia*. If we now pretend to be first-time readers of *N.E.* 1, it appears that Aristotle is leaving himself a good deal of wiggle room at this stage of his work. Thus, the “function” argument is compatible with three possible contexts

²⁹ Aristotle (1098b27–28) attributes these features of happiness to “many”, or “men of old,” or “a few eminent people” (*endoxoi*). Gauthier and Jolif (1970) take the partisans of *arete* to be the ancients (Homer, etc.), and opt for Plato’s *Philebus*, perhaps mediated by the *Protrepticus*, as Aristotle’s proof text for citing *phronesis*, *sophia*, and pleasure. Most of the older commentators, and also Broadie (2002), p. 281, take Aristotle to be distinguishing *phronesis* from *sophia* as in *N.E.* Book VI.

³⁰ Aristotle’s mention of *phronesis* and *sophia* in this context is overlooked in most of the studies I have consulted.

for deploying excellent rational activity – a life devoted to normative politics (exercising reason in social contexts), a life focused as exclusively as possible on philosophy (contemplative activity), and third, a life that combines both politics and philosophy. The cryptic sentence “if there are more excellences than one, [activity of soul] in accordance with the best and most complete” (1098a17–18), could in principle foreshadow Book X’s elevation of contemplation (the “dominant end” interpretation), but that exclusionary interpretation does not fit the political context Aristotle has employed so far; nor does it sit well with his explicitly postponing treatment of the contemplative life (1096a4–5). That Aristotle is completely leaving open the question, which of the possible plural excellences, if any, would satisfy the condition of being “best and most complete”, is shown by the fact that when he begins Book II, by observing that there is excellence of thought as well as excellence of character and that the two kinds of excellence differ in how we come to acquire them (1103a14–18), he says nothing about whether or how any of these excellences differ from one another in value or significance for happiness.³¹

Returning now to Book I, we should next note the main thrust of Aristotle’s argument from Chapter 9 up to Chapter 12:³²

- 9 Is happiness acquired by learning or habituation, or sent by God, or by chance?
- 10 Should no man be called happy while he lives?
- 11 Do the fortunes of the living affect the dead?
- 12 Virtue is praiseworthy, but happiness is above praise.

With Chapter 9 Aristotle begins for the first time to associate *eudaimonia* explicitly with divinity. As its possible sources, he nominates (A) learning (which anticipates the source of intellectual excellence), or habit (which anticipates the source of moral excellence), or some other practice; or (B) divine dispensation; or (C) chance. How does he ask us to adjudicate between these three types of source? First, turning to divinity, he says:

If anything is a gift from the gods to mankind, it is reasonable that happiness should be god-given, and most surely god-given of all human things inasmuch as it is by far the best. (1099b11–13)

³¹ The expression for “excellence of thought” is *arete dianoetike*, which in this context covers both *sophia* and *phronesis* (1103a6). It is only in *N.E.* VI that Aristotle distinguishes “practical” from “contemplative” thought, and starts to use *dianoetikon* to apply only to the former (1139a30–b5).

³² I take over the chapter headings given by Ross in Aristotle (1925).

Deferring further consideration of the divine source, he then takes up the (A) possibilities, saying:

Even if happiness is not god-sent, but comes as a result of virtue and some process of learning or training, it is thought to be the *most divine* of things because the prize and goal of virtue is manifestly what is best and something *divine* and blessed. (1099b14–18)

Finally, Aristotle dismisses (C), chance, as an appropriate source of happiness.

Pretending to be first-time readers of this text, we seem to be asked to conclude: Either (A) or (B) or (C); not (C) and not (B) *simpliciter*; therefore (A) but with connotations of (B) as well.³³ Alternatively, reading this passage in the light of *N.E.* x.7, we may see an anticipatory allusion to the statement that perfect (or complete) happiness is excellent activity of *nous* or whatever else in us is “divine or the most divine of the things in us” (1177a13–17). We have already noticed Aristotle’s tendency, outside as well as inside *N.E.* x, to characterize our human *nous* as divine or virtually so. Thus Aristotle’s dismissal of (B) – happiness as god-sent – is importantly qualified. Happiness is not dispensed to us by some divinely vouchsafed external gift, but he accepts a qualified version of (B), provided we interpret (B) by reference to *nous* as our internal divinity. And so, (A) and (B) do not point “in opposite directions” (see n.33).

To confirm the tight association between happiness and divinity, Aristotle turns in Chapter 12 to consider whether *eudaimonia* is something praised (*epaineton*) or, rather, something prized, or honored (*timion*). In the previous two chapters his focus had been on the vicissitudes of human life, with an implicit contrast to the absolute invulnerability of the gods. Thus he concludes Chapter 10 by saying that those who do fulfill his specifications for happiness may be called “blessed, as human beings” (1101a20–21). From this somewhat chastening conclusion it might seem to follow that human happiness cannot after all be regarded as something godlike. To correct that impression, Aristotle proposes that the value of happiness is, in effect, something absolute and beyond praise. Such qualities as ethical virtue are praised because of the relation in which they stand to something other than themselves, such as noble actions:

³³ Cf. Broadie (2002), p. 283: “Although Ar. opts for [A], he continues to call happiness ‘most divine’ [1099b16]. This insinuates the thought, on which he will build in x.7–8 ... that our human nature contains something divine or godlike – how not so, if godlike happiness is in our human power? Thus [A] and [B] are not pointing in opposite directions after all.”

What applies to the best things is not praise, but something greater and better ... for what we do to the gods and the *most godlike* of men is to call them blessed and happy ... No one praises happiness as he does justice, but rather calls it blessed, as being something more divine and better ... It seems to be so also from the fact that it is a first principle; for it is for the sake of happiness that we do all that we do, and the first principle and cause of all goods is, we claim, something prized and divine. (1101b23–1102a4)

This is Aristotle's last word about happiness in Book 1 of *N.E.* Most proponents of the "dominant end" interpretation say little or nothing about Aristotle's connections between happiness and divinity in these closing chapters of *N.E.* 1. By attending to the connections, as I have done here, it seems only reasonable to conclude that, at this stage of his argument, Aristotle proposes that all human *eudaimonia* is godlike. In Book x he will distinguish higher and lower recipes for happiness, and he will deem the life of the contemplative philosopher to be the happiest and most akin to the divine life as such. On returning to Book 1 after reading Book x, the earlier book's observations about happiness and divinity naturally acquire associations and nuance that they cannot express in their own context as such.

But to say that is to view Book 1 retrospectively, and not in the way in which Aristotle presumably intended his first-time readers to interpret his thoughts as they proceeded from Book 1 to Book x. If he approved the *N.E.* in the form and order it has reached us, we should presume either that he intended his initial account of happiness to apply equally well to the human good in both the forms that he eventually distinguishes, or (as I am sometimes tempted to think) that his eventual distinction between contemplative and political happiness was an afterthought that he did not originally intend to include in a work on *ethics*.

Either way, I think it is a profound mistake to take the references to divinity in *N.E.* 1 to make covert allusion to the contemplative, *as distinct from* the ethical or practical, route to happiness.³⁴ It is safer to suppose, as many do, that *N.E.* 1 underdetermines the kind of lives that satisfy the formal conditions of *eudaimonia*. As long as I can secure agreement to the godlikeness of *eudaimonia* as such, I can readily allow *N.E.* 1 to be compatible with both forms of happiness, leaving it to Book x to propose that happiness varies in degree and kind according to the type of excellence and activity by which it is instantiated.

³⁴ Hence the main argument of this chapter goes in quite the opposite direction to that of van Cleemput (2006), who proposes (p. 154) that Aristotle in *N.E.* 1.9–12 prepares "the way to identify *eudaimonia* with contemplation."

DIVINITY, HAPPINESS, AND *NOUS* IN
BOOK X OF THE *N.E.*

Aristotle returns to the subject of happiness halfway through Book x with the following transitional comment:

Now that we have spoken of the virtues, the forms of friendship, and the varieties of pleasure, what remains is to discuss in outline (*typoi*) the nature of happiness, since this is what we state the end (*telos*) of human nature to be. Our discussion will be the more concise if we first sum up what we have already said. (1176a30–33)

The summary he offers initially (1176a33–b9) recalls most of the criteria for happiness he has specified in Book I, though not in the order he set them out in *N.E.* 1.7–8: an activity, not a disposition (*hexis*), and specifically the type of activity that is desirable entirely and only for its own sake; self-sufficiency and completeness; virtuous actions; fineness and excellence (*kala kai spoudaia*).³⁵ He also elaborates the earlier criterion of pleasure, glossing it as the enjoyment of serious things (1176b9–1177a8). If his argument were then to proceed directly to Chapter 9, his text would read as follows:

Happiness does not consist in such practices [as comic activities and bodily pleasures], but, as we have said before, in virtuous activities. (*N.E.* x.6, 1177a9–11) ... If these matters and the virtues, and also friendship and pleasure, have been dealt with sufficiently in outline, are we to suppose that our project has reached its end? (*N.E.* x.9, 1179a33–35)

Actually, of course, the sentence immediately following the first one printed above (the last sentence of Chapter 6), is the first sentence of Chapter 7:

If happiness is activity in accordance with virtue, it is reasonable that it should be in accordance with the highest virtue; and this will be that of the best thing in us. (1177a12–13)

So begins Aristotle's excursus (for such is *N.E.* x.7–8) on the "super-human" happiness of the contemplative life, its affinity to the activity of the gods, and its superiority to "the life in accordance with the rest of virtue [1178a9–10, signifying practical wisdom and the moral virtues]; for activities performed according to them are human."

³⁵ Curzer (1990) suggests that these criteria are too different from those advanced in *N.E.* 1 to justify the thesis that Aristotle is continuing Book I's investigation of happiness. I disagree, but I am sympathetic to his view (p. 432) that *N.E.* x.6–8 is a "reconsideration" rather than "a mere continuation."

As previously observed, I assume that Aristotle intended his readers to encounter *N.E.* x.7–8 at this point of his work. Undeniably, though, his demotion of the political life – the life of practical wisdom and moral virtue – is extremely abrupt and difficult to accommodate to the main thrust of his work so far. For instance, in speaking of the special excellence of the contemplative life he dwells on its leisureliness, by contrast with the busy actions of politics and military service (1177b4–18), but he made no mention of leisure as a criterion of happiness in *N.E.* 1. Yet, by prefacing his treatment of contemplative happiness with many of the criteria set out in Book 1, Aristotle clearly wants his readers to keep these earlier criteria in mind; and indeed he argues that the contemplative life satisfies them better than acts of moral and political virtue, “splendid and great though these latter are” (1177b16–26).

But are we, as human animals, teleologically equipped specifically for a contemplative life?

Such a life would be too high for human beings; for it is not in so far as one is a human being that one will live so, but in so far as something divine is present in one; and by so much as this is superior to our composite nature is its activity superior to that which is the exercise of the rest of virtue. If *nous* is divine by comparison with a human being, the life according to *nous* is divine as compared with human life. (1177b26–30)

I have already commented on this challengingly difficult assertion. What we should make of it is central to my project in this essay. For, if we take Aristotle’s ensuing prescription, “we should strain every nerve to live in accordance with our divine *nous*,” to imply that the supreme value of the contemplative life authorizes the subordinate value of the virtuous political life and yet also explains what is excellent about morally virtuous action, paradox will infect the entire *N.E.* In my opinion at least, it is profoundly paradoxical, on the strength of *N.E.* x.7–8, to think that “excellent theoretical truthfulness sets the standard for the excellent practical truthfulness of morally virtuous action,” and that a virtuous choice is “a sort of contemplation in action.”³⁶ Can we avoid such a strained interpretation of Aristotle’s overall ethical project, while acknowledging his commitment to contemplation as the best, albeit transcendent and virtually superhuman, way of life?

I have been suggesting throughout this chapter that Aristotle’s appraisal of *nous* is the most promising approach to crediting him with a more or

³⁶ Richardson Lear (2004), p. 4. However, I applaud parts of her analysis, such as her admitting the possibility that “morally virtuous action is godlike enough to count as happiness for us” (p. 195).

less unitary and consistent conception of happiness. In particular, I have emphasized his view, outside the context of Book x, that human *nous* as such endows us with something godlike. Let us now ask how this doctrine squares with his preliminary statement in *N.E.* x.7, 1177a12–18.

After saying that happiness, *qua* virtuous activity, should accord with the excellence of what is best in us, Aristotle continues:

Whether it is *nous* or something else, which is thought to be our natural ruler and guide, and to take thought of things noble and divine, whether it is itself also divine or only the most divine thing in us, the activity of this in accordance with its proper virtue will be perfect happiness.

Throughout this chapter Aristotle blows hot and cold in the firmness of his findings, as in his assertions of excellence and perfection, on the one hand, and his hesitancy over *nous* and divinity on the other hand. Such wavering should warn us against identifying a selection of his statements in this context as the basis for interpreting the entire *N.E.* Here, though, I call particular attention to his specifying our divine *nous* (with his qualifications removed) as both “our natural ruler and guide” and the instrument of our thinking “things noble and divine.” The roles attributed here to *nous* are both “practical” and “theoretical.”³⁷

As such, they recall Aristotle’s analysis of *nous* in Book vi.11, 1143a35–b5, where he attributes both roles to this faculty – discovering first principles in theoretical reasoning and identifying the facts pertaining to practical reasoning.³⁸ How, then, should we interpret “the proper virtue” of *nous*? What many of Aristotle’s interpreters, myself included, would like him to answer is “an appropriate combination of theoretical and practical wisdom,” but, instead, he bifurcates these virtues, treating the former as the basis of perfect happiness and godlikeness, and the latter as the essence of purely human, second-degree happiness. In many other contexts of his corpus, as we have seen, Aristotle treats *nous* as a unitary faculty whose functions cover all types of reasoning, and thus provide the human animal with a divine essence. Here, instead, his distinction between perfect (godlike) and second-degree (strictly human) happiness depends on limiting the activity of *nous* to godlike contemplation, and giving *nous* no

³⁷ As Broadie (2002), p. 441, notes.

³⁸ In *N.E.* vi.2, 1139a12, Aristotle divides the rational part of the soul into scientific (*epistemonikon*) and calculative (*logistikon*) parts, assigning the former part to contemplation and the latter to practical reasoning. Like Broadie (see previous note), I take it that the *nous* Aristotle refers to at the beginning of *N.E.* x.7 “is both practical and theoretical” (otherwise it could not be called “ruling and guiding”) and is therefore not presumed to issue from different parts of the soul, as in Book vi.2.

apparent role at all in the domain of morally virtuous activity. Far from saying that there is anything godlike about practical wisdom (*phronesis*), Aristotle offers no textual support in *N.E.* x.7–8 (or in vi.7) for suggesting, as Broadie does (see above), that second-degree or political happiness gets its status as *happiness* from its *dependence* on, or *resemblance* to, “the perfect divine paradigm.”

Could his reticence in this regard be due, at least in part, to the rhetorical fervor he brings to his account of “perfect” happiness? We should carefully observe how this runs. First we get an accumulation of superlatives applied to contemplative activity – “best” (or “highest”), “most divine” (in us), “most continuous,” “most pleasurable,” “especially self-sufficient,” and special properties such as “leisured” and “tireless,” all of which pertain to contemplation, not as attributes of happiness as such but as attributes of “perfect” happiness. Next, we are told that, though such a life transcends the strictly human, we should strive for it in order to achieve what is best and happiest. That concludes *N.E.* x.7. So far, Aristotle has said nothing to imply that some contemplative activity, or even an approximation of it, is a necessary condition of any life that satisfies the sufficient conditions for happiness – rather, contemplation is the activity essential to the *happiest* life.

The next chapter (x.8) begins: “Second happiest is the life in accordance with the rest of virtue.” Aristotle then explains that this specifically human life, and its happiness, pertain to us as composites of body and soul. “But the virtue of *nous* is separate” (1178a22). Hence its activity is less in need of everyday “necessities.” As in the previous chapter this reference to *nous* applies to it purely as the faculty that enables us to contemplate. However, Aristotle moves seamlessly from talking about “the contemplative man” to that same man’s choosing to act virtuously, “in so far as he is a man” (1178b3–6), and his therefore needing the where-withal to perform such [practical moral] acts. He then gives a further proof for “perfect” happiness being a contemplative activity: that must be the gods’ activity because gods do not engage in any actions in the ethical or productive domain. The only activity that leaves for them to practice is contemplative. Since the gods are paradigms of happiness, contemplation is the activity that makes human beings most akin to the gods and therefore “happiest” (1178b23).

Thus far Aristotle’s focus has been entirely on “perfect” happiness. But he now says:

The whole life of the gods is blessed, and that of men too in so far as some likeness of such activity belongs to them; but none of the other animals is happy,

since they in no way share in contemplation. Happiness extends then, just so far as contemplation does, and those to whom contemplation more fully belongs are more truly happy, not incidentally but in virtue of the contemplation; for this in itself is precious. Happiness, therefore, must be some kind (*tis*) of contemplation. (1178b25–32)

It is the second part of this passage that has caused Aristotle's interpreters the greatest difficulty. Up to this point his focus had been entirely on "perfect happiness." None of his comments on the second-level happiness of morally virtuous activity suggested its having any connection with contemplation. Yet, now, taken at face value, he appears to be making contemplation "of some kind" a necessary condition for *any* authentic happiness.

The best solution I can think of to restore coherence and plausibility to this passage is to presume that Aristotle's mentions of happiness here should be taken to refer restrictively, as they have done hitherto in this context, to its perfect form.³⁹ In this way we are relieved of the rather desperate expedient of importing "some kind of contemplation" into the exercise of practical wisdom.⁴⁰

CONCLUSION

If the second-level or strictly human happiness has nothing directly or indirectly to do with contemplation, as I am suggesting, are the two types of happiness quite independent of one another in their intellectual conditions? By no means. We can support Broadie's intuition concerning the "resemblance" of each type to the divine paradigm by invoking the quasi-divinity of human *nous*, taking the term in its broad usage as the faculty of all types of thought and reasoning. In *N.E.* Book I Aristotle draws on divinity and excellent rational activity to make preliminary proposals concerning the essence of human happiness, without differentiating between practical and theoretical reason or proposing that there is more than one level of happiness. In *N.E.* Book X he recalls the principal criteria he has invoked in Book I. This reprise reminds us that everything he has been saying about morally virtuous activity in the preceding books fits his overall interest in delineating happiness. More particularly, though, the reprise serves as the prelude to introducing the reader to "perfect"

³⁹ This proposal (canvassed but rejected by Kraut [1989], p. 62) gains support from 1178b33, which immediately follows the statement that seems to identify happiness *simpliciter* with contemplation: "But, being a human being, one will also need external prosperity."

⁴⁰ See Richardson Lear (2004), especially pp. 194–96.

happiness – a *new* topic, whose abrupt emergence at this very late stage of the main argument, though arresting as literature, is structurally flawed. For it turns out, so Aristotle will argue, that his previously articulated criteria make a much better fit with a type of happiness that falls outside the main scope of his work in its political context: a type of transcendent happiness which aligns us directly with divinity, and which, thanks to our innate affinity to divine rationality, we are capable of trying to achieve by contemplating – at least to some extent and for some of the time.

Does this make Aristotle's concept of the human goal inclusive or dominant? I leave that for others to judge.⁴¹

⁴¹ Limitations of space prevent me from considering how well my conclusions fit Aristotle's position elsewhere, especially *E.E.* VIII.3 and *Pol.* VII. 2–3, on the relation between excellent political or moral activity and the philosophical goal of contemplation. Suffice it to say here that I think these passages are broadly consistent with my findings.

PART III

Philosophical psychology

*Aristotle's definition of non-rational
pleasure and pain and desire*

Klaus Corcilius

"And what is natural is pleasant; and all pursue their natural pleasure."

(Aristotle, *Historia Animalium* IX.1, 589a8–9, trans. D. M. Balme)

Aristotle thinks that it is not enough for us to simply know what virtue is, but that we also need to know how to bring virtue about. In order to do this, it is vital to have some insight into the non-rational mechanisms of human behavior, since, for Aristotle, the acquisition of virtue does not primarily consist in intellectual instruction, but in an adequate conditioning of our non-rational motivational dispositions. Before engaging in ethical debates, therefore, the young ought to be habituated in the right way such that they non-rationally desire and feel pleasure and pain about the right things. Non-rational pleasure and pain and desire thus provide a psychological mechanism which is central for the practical purpose of Aristotle's ethical project. But what *is* this mechanism? This is the question I am going to investigate in this chapter. For Aristotle, such an investigation, since it is not concerned with *rational* behavior, falls into the domain of his natural philosophy.¹ And it is from this perspective that I will approach the question here, too, namely from the perspective of Aristotle's theory of animal behavior in his *De Anima*.

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¹ Cf. *P.A.* I.1, 641a32–b10, where a clear line is drawn between the domain of natural science and the science concerned with the content of human thought.

I SOUL AS EFFICIENT CAUSE OF
ANIMAL LOCOMOTION

From the perspective of Aristotle's natural philosophy, animal motivation is to be accounted for in terms of causation of local motion. Given that, for Aristotle, the *soul* is the primary cause of all of the animal's motions it is also the primary cause of its locomotion. And this, as it seems, in quite a robust sense. Aristotle seems to think that the soul is the moving source of the animal's locomotion somehow in a literal way. Thus, *De Anima* claims that the soul, among other things, is the efficient cause of animal locomotion (*D.A.* 415b10, 21f.). Not surprisingly, this claim has puzzled interpreters from early on, since it seems difficult to reconcile with *De Anima*'s hylomorphic conception of the soul: how can the soul be the moving source of locomotion if the soul is incorporeal and hence not moved itself, as *De Anima* emphasizes over and over again? Alexander of Aphrodisias, in his account of the soul, offers the following explanation: The soul is the efficient cause of the animal's locomotion as an *unmoved mover*. It moves the body from place to place in the same way in which the art of carpentry is the moving principle of the motions of a carpenter: the body of knowledge that makes up his art is the ultimate moving source of the carpenter's motions, because it determines his motions insofar as he is a carpenter. Throughout this process the art of carpentry itself remains unmoved, because it is not affected by being put into practice by the carpenter.²

This model seems convincing with respect to understanding and explaining the way in which the Aristotelian soul can be a principle of the coming-to-be and vegetative self-preservation of the animal. But in the case of animal locomotion I find it difficult to apply. This is because of an important disanalogy between Alexander's art-model on the one hand and animal locomotion on the other. For the art of carpentry provides the carpenter with an immutable plan of how to move and do things correctly in working with wood. Here it is easy to see how this can apply in the case of the constitution and coming-into-existence of animals, for these processes, like the carpenter's motions in molding his artifact, seem to follow an unchanging plan according to which animal bodies are generated and preserved. But there seems to be no such regularity in the case of animal locomotion. Animals move about in ways that do not seem to follow an immutable plan in any *obvious* way.

² Alexander of Aphrodisias (1887), 78, 24ff.

In what follows I offer an interpretation of the Aristotelian notion of non-rational pleasure and pain and desire as giving a *basic* answer to the question of how the soul moves the animal from place to place. I will try to integrate some of the intuitions of Alexander's art-model, although I will differ fundamentally from the details of his account.

Aristotle expounds his basic view of non-rational desire jointly with his notion of non-rational pleasure and pain in *De Anima* III.7, 431a8–14,³ and the major part of this chapter will be devoted to the interpretation of this passage. But before starting to interpret this difficult piece of text it will be useful to look at some general “dialectical” requirements for the definition of desires which Aristotle establishes in the *Topics*. I shall try to offer an interpretation that observes these criteria.

PART I

2 THE TOPICS ON THE DEFINITION OF DESIRES

In book six of his *Topics* Aristotle discusses *topoi* that relate to definitions. One of the examples he makes use of is the definition of a desire. This is the definition of wish (*boulêsis*). I divide the passage into two sections:

T 1 If the term defined be relative, either in itself or in respect of its genus, see whether the definition fails to mention that to which the term, either in itself or in respect of its genus, is relative, e.g., if he has defined “knowledge” as an “incontrovertible conception” or “wishing” as “painless desire.” For the essence of everything relative is relative to something else, seeing that the being of every relative term is identical with being in a certain relation to something. He ought, therefore, to have said that knowledge is “conception of a knowable” and that wishing is “desire for a good.” Likewise, also, if he has defined “grammar” as “knowledge of letters”: whereas in the definition there ought to be rendered either the thing to which the term itself is relative, or that to which its genus is relative. (*Top.* 146a36–b9)⁴

Here, Aristotle states a basic fact about desires: they fall under the category of relatives. Relatives have their being and essence in relation to something else. They are what they are because there is something else to which they belong in one way or the other. From this Aristotle infers that wish, like any other relative, ought to be defined by means of its correlative. In the case of wish, the rational desire, this correlative is a good and

³ I will argue below why this passage contains a definition of non-rational pleasure and pain and desire exclusively.

⁴ Trans. Pickard-Cambridge, slightly modified.

not the fact (true, for Aristotle) that it is painless. The subsequent *topos* introduces a further criterion:

T 2 Or see if a relative term has been described not in relation to its end, the end in anything being whatever is best or for the sake of which the other things are. Hence, it is what is best or ultimate that should be stated, e.g., that appetite is not for the pleasant but for pleasure: for it is for the sake of this that we choose what is pleasant as well. (*Top.* 146b9–12)

The defining correlative of desires is their end or goal. And this end or goal is supposed to be “best” or “ultimate.” Why “ultimate?” Looking at the example we find that in the case of appetite (*epithumia*) the ultimate end consists in the abstract “pleasure.” It does not consist in a concrete object or in types or species of such objects. In this respect the text is very clear: it explicitly excludes concrete objects as the defining correlatives of appetite by saying that the pleasant is not the object of appetite, because even pleasant things we do not choose for their own sake but for the sake of pleasure (146b12).

It seems that with this Aristotle wants to avoid definitional inadequacy by taking into account the fact that we can desire all sorts of things, pleasurable or not, for the most diverse purposes. We can, for example, desire a glass of water to quench our thirst (an appetite) or to take a medication (a rational desire) or to throw it in the face of somebody who we think offended us (a spirited desire). This multiple usability shows that the glass of water by itself does not indicate for what reason it is desired. This reason we know only if we know the *ultimate* end for the sake of which the glass (and every other concrete object) is desired.⁵ Only ultimate ends cannot be subsumed under, or be made instrumental to, other ends. Concrete objects cannot fulfill this criterion, because they can always be instrumental to some other end. What seems important is that with a definition by means of ultimate ends, the possibility of other, dominating higher-order desires is excluded. When the answer to the question “why do you desire this object?” is “because of the pleasure” it seems pointless to further ask “and why do you desire pleasure?” This is so because if the answerer came

⁵ This variability may be absent or significantly weakened in the case of brute animals since brute animals for the most part seem unable to associate their basic desires with concrete objects which are not directly conducive to the satisfaction of their desires. Hence, in their case the desired concrete objects seem to be more or less reliable indicators of the underlying type of desire: if a brute animal desires a drink it is almost certain that it does so for the sake of quenching its thirst (an appetite). But that does not change Aristotle’s point, which is definitional. For, as we will see, even if the concrete objects we desire would reliably indicate the type of desire involved, still neither the concrete objects themselves nor their types could serve as the corresponding ends of the *types* of desire in question (see n.7 below).

up with an answer different from his previous “because of the pleasure,” then this answer would state the true correlative end of his desire. What he would really desire in this case, then, would not be pleasure, but a pleasurable object for the sake of something else, and not for pleasure. It thus seems that the *Topics* calls for ultimate ends as the correlative objects for types of desires to meet general explanatory requirements.⁶

3 ULTIMATE ENDS

This is confirmed by a passage from the *Posterior Analytics*. It says that the question of why someone performed an action is answered in a scientifically satisfactory way only if we, in a series of ends, arrive at an *ultimate* end (*eschaton*, 85b29). Such ultimate ends are ends from which it is no longer possible to say that they have been chosen for the sake of something else:

T 3 Again, we seek the reason why up to a certain point, and we think we know something when it is not the case that it comes about or exists because something else does – for an end and limit is already the ultimate in this way. E.g., with what purpose did he come? In order to get the money. And that in order to pay back what he owed; and that in order not to act unjustly. Proceeding in this way, when it is no longer because of something else or with some other purpose, we say that it is because of this as an end that he came (or that it is the case or came about), and that then we best know why he came. (*An. post.* 85b27–35)

And in the immediate sequel of this passage (*An. post.* 85b35–86a2) Aristotle states the same with regard to all of the four causes. He concludes by stating that *all* such ultimate causes are universal (*katholou*, in 86a2), that is, including the final cause. This, I think, shows that the *Topics*’ definitional criteria exactly meet the general explanatory requirements stated in the *Posterior Analytics*. Aristotle’s requirement of an ultimate and universal correlate for the definition of desires provides precisely such an end or starting point of explanation which the *Posterior Analytics* require generally for all of the four causes.⁷

⁶ Note that these definitions do not contain assertions about the mental representations of the desiring subject. Not everybody who has a desire for, e.g., a drink is thereby aware of the fact that his or her desire is for the sake of *pleasure*.

⁷ If we transfer the *Posterior Analytics*’ series of why-questions to desires and their super-ordinate desires we get the following result:

- (a) this thirst → this drink here
- (b) thirst → drink
- (c) appetite → pleasure
- (d) desire → good.

PART II

4 THE DEFINITION OF NON-RATIONAL
PLEASURE AND PAIN AND DESIRE

The relevant passage is *De Anima* III.7, 431a8–14. There are many problems with this chapter. Its function within the overall argument of the *De Anima* is not clear and it is by no means obvious whether it forms a coherent whole. In light of these difficulties, I will refrain from discussing the context of the passage.⁸ But it will be necessary to say some words on its scope and content.

As argued above, I believe that the passage deals with non-rational pleasure and pain and desire *exclusively*. This implies that it does *not* discuss the pleasures and desires which result from the activity of the intellect and also, as we will see, certain perceptual pleasures. My reasons for thinking this will be given shortly. As another preparatory remark, I would like to add that Aristotle in the *De Anima* has a methodological interest in being as comprehensive as possible. *De Anima* is a treatise devoted to the definition of psychic capacities. These capacities are meant to serve as the basic principles in the scientific explanation of living things (*D.A.* I.1, II.3–4). The definition of the psychic capacities ought, therefore, to apply to all the living beings that possess them. To give an example, Aristotle's definition of the perceptual capacity of the soul as the capacity to receive perceptible forms without their matter (*D.A.* II.11, 423b17–19) names just the bare bones of what it takes for an animal to perceive, namely that it must be capable of receiving the forms of things without taking in the things themselves. But Aristotle thinks that there are animals that can do much more with their perceptual capacity than just receiving perceptible forms. He thinks for example that some are capable of associating a plurality of perceptual impressions, and some, in addition to that, are even capable of thinking about what they perceive. But Aristotle, in order to

This is a series of increasingly general desires with their corresponding objects. The series shows why concrete objects for Aristotle are unsuitable as the defining objects for types of desires. It is that the different degrees of generality of desires do not in each case correspond to genus/species-relations of the corresponding natural substances (whereas “drink” as the correlative object of thirst is the species of “this drink here,” the correlative object of appetite is not “nourishment,” as it would be if it followed the genus/species relations of its correlative objects, but “pleasure”). In other words: objects of desires *qua* such do not stand in natural genus- and species-relations, but occupy positions in *hierarchies of ends* (cf. *An. post.* I.2, 72a29f.).

⁸ Editors such as Torstrik and (following him) Ross thought of the chapter as containing an assemblage of disconnected statements. A more optimistic way of conceiving of the structure of *D.A.* III.7 is suggested by Burnyeat (2001), p. 72.

give a definition that applies to all the cases in which perception occurs in nature, gives only a *minimum account* of what it is to be in possession of this capacity. For that reason he does not address any of the specificities of either human perception or the perception of particular kinds of animals. It is in this sense a *basic* definition. I think that this method, i.e., to define psychic faculties and activities by way of such minimum accounts, is characteristic of Aristotle's overall approach in defining psychic capacities in the *De Anima*. I suggest that this holds also for the case of the definition of non-rational pleasure and pain and desire in III.7. So, this definition is also likely to give a minimum account basic to *all* the different forms in which non-rational desire and pleasure and pain occur in nature, including humans, dogs, worms, and possibly even sponges.⁹

Coming to the text, I will divide it into three sections.

(T4a) To perceive then is like bare saying or thinking; but whenever it is pleasant or painful, the soul as if it were affirming or denying pursues or avoids, **(b)** and to feel pleasure and pain is to act with the perceptual mean in relation to what is good or bad insofar as they are such, **(c)** and avoidance and pursuit when actual are the same. And what is capable of pursuing and what is capable of avoiding are not different, either from one another or from what is capable of sense-perception; but their being is different. (*D.A.* III.7, 431a8–14)

The first part of the definition consists of a multi-stage analogy between the thinking of simple terms, their combination to propositions and affirmation and denial on the one hand with perceiving pleasure and pain and desire on the other. The analogy contains, I think, the following three stages:

- (i) thinking of simple terms → perceiving
- (ii) [the combination of terms to propositions] → pleasure and pain
- (iii) affirmation / negation → pursuit / avoidance.

The first item of stage (ii) of the analogy, the combination of terms to propositions, is not explicitly stated by Aristotle. But I think in the context of the analogy it is clear that he thought of pleasure and pain as either consisting of, or involving, some sort of combination of two factors (namely perception and good or bad things insofar as they are such). Desire, to judge from the analogy, is nothing simple for Aristotle. Rather, it essentially involves a combination of a plurality of factors. But desire does not correspond to a simple combination of these factors, but

⁹ Aristotle has general methodological reasons for proceeding this way (see especially *An. post.* I.4, 73b25–74a3).

to a *consequence* of their combination which follows upon it like affirmation and denial follow upon the simple thinking of a proposition. It thus seems that there are two basic things this analogy is supposed to show. First, that the three stages form a series of events in which the occurrence of the later stages depends on the existence of the previous and, second, that stages (ii) and (iii) are complex in character. This, I think, is also all that the analogy is supposed to show.¹⁰

Mostly, however, the analogy has been interpreted as conveying more than just this. Many commentators think of it as describing either an implicit judgment or some other sort of discriminatory act analogous to affirmation and denial by means of which the animal somehow represents or perceives an object *as* good or *as* bad. But Aristotle is not saying that the soul judges or sees something *as* good or *as* bad and then pursues or avoids, but that, whenever a perception is pleasant or painful, the soul pursues or avoids *as if it were* affirming or denying. This implies that the soul is not affirming or denying, but doing something which *corresponds to* affirming or denying, namely pursuing or avoiding. The wording in section (a) gives us no reason to think that Aristotle thought of pursuit and avoidance as involving (or presupposing) a kind of implicit judgment or a perceiving something *as* good. The wording of section (b), by contrast, *can* be taken as saying that pleasure and pain consist in somehow perceiving the good- or badness of things. And this is the way in which most interpreters seem to take it when they attribute to Aristotle a notion of sensory pleasure and pain as necessarily involving a perceiving-*as* good or *as* bad. But (b) *need* not be taken that way. The relation expressed by the “*pros*” in line a11 need not be interpreted as pointing to what the cognizing subject is aware of (subjective reading).¹¹ It can also be interpreted as pointing to a relation which objectively holds between the perceiving subject and the perceived object without the former being necessarily aware of the relation (objective reading).¹²

¹⁰ The parallel in *N.E.* 1139a21f. is not of great help here, since it restates only the last stage (iii) of the analogy.

¹¹ Indeed, as we have seen, Aristotle defines the types of desire by their “ultimate ends” without thereby making statements about the mental representations of the animals that have these desires.

¹² “To perceive *x* as *y*” in this context allows for more than one interpretation. It could mean (i) the way in which an object in the world appears to a perceiver such that *x* is the object independently of the perceiver and *y* the way in which it appears to her or him, or it could mean (ii) perceptual awareness of an object plus a certain modality with which it appears to the perceiver, *x* being the perceptual awareness of an object and *y* an additional aspect under which *x* is perceived. (i) is harmless insofar as it does not involve the awareness of anything over and above *y* on the side of the perceiver, whereas (ii) is more demanding in that it involves both the simultaneous (or

I think there are good reasons why the objective reading should be preferred and why it is important not to fill in the notion of implicit judgment or perceiving-as in Aristotle's account of non-rational pleasure and pain and desire. The following list of objections against the perceiving-as view (preferred by most of the recent interpreters of *D.A.* 431a8–14¹³) is intended to motivate the reader to follow me in my ensuing attempt to pursue an interpretation along the lines of the objective reading:

- Given that it seems possible to perceive things as good or as bad without feeling pleasure or being attracted towards them, the notion of perceiving-as good or bad is in need of clarification. As a consequence, it is also unclear how exactly it is supposed to do its explanatory work in the above passage.
- If animals perceive things as good or as bad, how do they know or feel which of the things they perceive are thus qualified? There is no sensory organ for the awareness of goodness in Aristotle. He characterizes the perceptual mean as capable of distinguishing perceptible qualities, but there seems to be no perceptual quality corresponding either to “good” or to “bad.” On Aristotle's own theory of perception perceiving-as good seems inexplicable.
- *Politics* 1253a10–18 explicitly says that there is no perception of good and bad in animals.
- The fact that Aristotle thinks that *all* animals, including the most primitive, are capable of desiring and feeling pleasure and pain seems to commit this interpretation to conceive of Aristotelian perception as primitively entailing the capacity of perceiving-as good or bad. But there seems to be no text in Aristotle that supports this view.¹⁴

somehow mixed) awareness of *x* and of *y*. This amounts to something relatively close (or analogous) to attributing a property to a subject.

¹³ Richardson (1992), pp. 394f.; Achtenberg (2002), pp. 165ff.; Whiting (2002b), pp. 173f.; Charles (2006), pp. 27–29; Morel (1997a), p. 132. For earlier commentators cf. Hicks (1907), pp. 527f., who himself advocates “implicit judgments”; similarly Tuozy (1999), pp. 338, 344–46 (“non-conceptualized mental predication”). The tradition of this interpretation can be traced back to Alexander himself (1887), who accounts for pleasure and pain anachronistically with the aid of the Stoic notion of mental assent (*sunkatathesis*), which he calls an act of discrimination (*krisis*, 78, 14f., either on the rational – assent to propositions – or the sub-rational level – assent to *phantasiai*, 71, 22ff., 78, 13ff.). He further defines desire (*hormē, orexis*) as a *sunkatathesis* to things which are absent as choiceworthy (*bōs hairetois*, 72, 26f.).

¹⁴ The feeling of being attracted by the object, for that matter, cannot account for the perceiving-as, either, since *D.A.* 431a8–10 makes it clear that desire depends on pleasure and pain and not vice versa. The attempt to account for this by means of an interpretative function of *phantasia* (Nussbaum [1985], Essay 5; similarly already in Siwek [1930], pp. 139ff., especially p. 140n.1) is not really supported by the texts and has subsequently encountered much criticism.

- On the perceiving-as good view, pleasure and pain are *cognitions*. But *N.E.* 1175b34f. denies that pleasure is either thinking or perceiving (on the grounds that this is “absurd,” *atopon*).
- Why, on this account, do animals at different times perceive different things as good or bad or indeed the same things at different times? The interpretation offers no explanation for this.
- The perceiving-as interpretation stresses some sort of awareness of the end-relation on the side of the animal as a necessary condition for pleasure and desire. But this seems to make it difficult to account for misrepresentations of this relation. For unless we divide in some robust sense our desiring of an object from the awareness of the way in which this object appears desirable to us, *prima facie* there seems to be no possibility for us to go wrong or to deceive ourselves with respect to the true motives for which we desire objects (i) or whether we do desire objects in the first place (ii): if awareness of the desirability of an object were constitutive for desiring it, it would not be possible to desire something without simultaneously being aware of this. Moreover, in desiring a given object we would always and simultaneously be aware of the true reason why it appears desirable to us, since its appearing desirable to us would be an essential part of our desiring it. The way in which (or the description under which) it appears desirable to us would, then, not be liable to error (i). But it seems obvious that we *can* go wrong about both of these things (with the arguable exception of rational desires).
- It is not obvious, and indeed not likely, that Aristotle makes use of the notion of perceiving-as in *D.A.* 431a8–14. Elsewhere, he uses the expression “to perceive as one” (*aisthanesthai hōs hen*) as referring to the perception of mixed components which are not perceived as individual components, but as a single perceptible quality (*De sensu* 448a10). But this is an ordinary perception of a quality which objectively happens to be a mixed quality (without the animal being aware of this). This, I think, shows that Aristotle, if he had wanted to say that animals perceive things *as* good or *as* ends, could have said this himself. And given that he could, it seems significant that he did not.
- Aristotle’s discussions of pleasure in *N.E.* vii and x do not say or imply that an awareness of good- or badness is necessary for pleasure or pain. Instead they insist on a view of pleasure which ties it to states and activities without attaching to it a determinate intentional object, modality, or other cognitive feature specific for pleasure. Pleasure always involves some sort of cognition, but is not itself a cognition.

I hope that these objections make it clear that the perceiving-as good or bad interpretation does not provide a satisfying *explanation* of pleasure and pain and desire. On the contrary, it raises more questions than it answers. Additionally, it does not seem to be supported by the texts and is explicitly contradicted by *Pol.* 1253a10–18 and *N.E.* 1175b34f. In what follows, I will suggest a reading of the analogy in *D.A.* 431a8–14 which avoids these difficulties and provides a genuine explanation of non-rational pleasure and pain and desire.

5 PLEASURE AND PAIN

Before I interpret the definition in section (b) as a whole, some of the occurring expressions require explanation. These are:

- (1) “to feel pleasure and pain”
- (2) “to be active with the perceptual mean”
- (3) “what is good or bad insofar as they are such.”

(1) “*To feel pleasure and pain.*” This expression could be taken to refer to every sort of experience of pleasure and of pain. In this case it would entail both rational and non-rational pleasure and pain. However, there are clear signs that only the latter – i.e., non-rational pleasures and pains – are at issue here. First, in the immediate sequel to the passage, Aristotle introduces the thinking soul (*dianoëtikê psychê*), which would be odd if he had meant to include the intellect in the previous remarks.¹⁵ Second, according to Aristotle, the pleasures that result from the activity of the intellect do not result from the activity of sense-perception but from the activity of the *intellect*, which is not mentioned in the text (see *N.E.* x.3, 1173b16–19, x.4, 1175a25–28). Third, the only parallel of this expression (*to hêdesthai kai lupeisthai*) I could find in the corpus supports this view. *N.E.* iv.2, 1121a3 says that it is the task of the virtues of character to make us feel pleasure and pain about the right things. The virtues of character are not

¹⁵ This is also noted by Lorenz. He further remarks that *D.A.* 431a8–14 talks about appetitive desire (*epithumia*) only, because “(t)hese, after all, are the motivating conditions which arise from awareness, or from the representation, specifically of pleasant and painful things” (Lorenz [2006], p. 140n.7). For the reasons stated above I think that the account in *D.A.* 431a8–14 is of a more general nature, i.e., a basic account intended to apply to all the cases in which non-rational pleasure and pain occur in nature. This comprises the objects of both appetitive (*epithumia*) and spirited desire (*thumos*). Aristotle thinks that *all* the things we desire in acting are pleasant or painful for us (*Phys.* 247a7–14; *N.E.* 1104b8–16, b34–1105a2, including the actions of the virtuous, *N.E.* 1099a7–15, 1153b25–31; *M.A.* 701b33–36); but he does not think that we desire all of these objects also *for the sake of* pleasure (as in *epithumetic* desires).

concerned with the pleasures that result from the activity of the intellect. The latter form a different class of pleasure for Aristotle for which there are no corresponding states of pain (see (3) below). It seems therefore that the expression “pleasure and pain” refers to non-rational pleasures and pains exclusively.¹⁶

(2) “*To be active with the perceptual mean.*” This is a technical expression from *De Anima*’s theory of sense-perception in Book II, Chapters II and 12. There Aristotle introduces the perceptual mean in explaining the production or discrimination of sensible qualities. Without going into any detail as to how exactly the perceptual mean is supposed to contribute to this, I think what Aristotle must have in mind here is actual awareness of perceptible qualities. The fact that he expresses this in a rather technical language may well indicate that he wants to be as precise as possible. “To be active with the perceptual mean,” then, indicates the moment in which sense-perception in the basic sense, i.e., the awareness of a perceptible quality, is actually taking place.¹⁷ This is best understood as a minimum criterion, i.e., higher and more complex forms of perceptual cognition are not necessary for the sensation of pleasure and pain, but by no means ruled out by the definition. To be active with the perceptual mean, then, would be the sort of cognition that the sensation of pleasure and pain *minimally* involves.¹⁸

(3) “*What is good or bad insofar as they are such.*” This formulation relates (cf. the “*pros*” in line a11) the activity of the perceptual mean to “what is good or bad insofar as they are such.” It seems difficult to make sense of this expression. In the *D.A.* we are given no hints as to how to understand it. However, there are two general discussions of pleasure in

¹⁶ *Rhet.* 1354b10f. seems to point into a similar direction (*hêdu ê luperon*). Cf. also the expression “pleasure or pain” referring to non-rational pleasures and pains in *N.E.* 1105b23 and *E.E.* 1220b14.

¹⁷ *Phys.* 247a7–14; *De sensu* 436a6–18; *Rhet.* 1370a27f., less technically, also make the point that we feel pleasure or pain *by* perceiving things (albeit not by perceiving them *as* something).

¹⁸ Aristotle states several times that wherever there is the capacity of perception, there is also the capacity of pleasure and pain and desire (*D.A.* 413b23, 414b1–16, 434a2f.; *De somn.* 454b29–31; *P.A.* 661a6–8). Given that there are animals that only possess the sense of touch, the minimum cognitive requirements for pleasure and pain should be fairly basic. As the *Ethics* shows, Aristotle generally thinks that all pleasures occur in connection with the activity of some cognitive capacity (*N.E.* 1174b14f.). It makes sense, therefore, to take him here in the *De Anima* to be stating cognitive minimum conditions for the experience of pleasure and pain. If the basic form of perceptual discrimination is necessary (and sufficient) for pleasure and pain, then this may present a challenge for interpretations that account for pleasure in Aristotle as a sort of proprioception (cf. Ricken [1976], p. 129n.5; [1995], pp. 224f., based on passages such as *N.E.* 1170a25ff.), since proprioception is arguably a higher-order form of perception of which primitive perceivers may not be capable.

N.E. VII and X, including a discussion of the relation of pleasure and the good. The problem with these discussions is that many scholars think that their respective accounts of pleasure present philosophically important differences. In addition to this, *N.E.* VII belongs to the so-called “common books” of Aristotle’s ethical works (together with books V and VI), whose manuscript tradition assigns them to both the *Eudemian* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*, such that it seems difficult, if not impossible, to dissociate a discussion of the content of these books from the question of to which of the two works these books belong. In view of these difficulties I will proceed by restricting myself only to points upon which the two discussions of pleasure in the *Ethics* agree. In particular, I will bypass discussion of Aristotle’s own definition of pleasure.¹⁹

Both discussions agree in making pleasures not themselves cognitions but somehow *depend* on cognitions.²⁰ They agree that the nature of the cognized objects is partially responsible for determining both the quality and the quantity of the resulting pleasures (*N.E.* X.4, 1174b14ff.; X.6, 1175b36ff.; VII.12, 1153a6f.). They also agree in distinguishing between two basic types of pleasure, namely the pleasures *N.E.* VII calls “simple” or “natural” on the one hand, and the pleasures that result from the cognition of things “incidentally pleasurable” (*hêdea kata sumbebêkos*) on the other. The difference is that simple pleasures do not have corresponding contrary states of pain, whereas pleasures resulting from things incidentally pleasurable do have such contrary painful states (*N.E.* VII, 1152b33–36; 1154b15–18).²¹ Examples of the latter are the pleasures resulting from the replenishment of bodily needs, e.g., eating when hungry or drinking when thirsty. Examples of simple pleasures are the pleasures that result from hearing of certain sounds, seeing of colors (“aesthetical pleasures”), or from contemplating mathematical theorems (*N.E.* X.3, 1173b16–19; VII.12, 1152b36–1153a4). Both discussions agree that the cognition of these objects

¹⁹ It is important to note that Aristotle in both of these discussions is not trying to define pleasure and pain, but *pleasure* alone. Strictly speaking, the goal in these chapters is not even the definition of pleasure, but to discuss the relation of pleasure to the highest good and to show that all pleasures are *goods* in some sense.

²⁰ And here the wording is not unlike what we find in *D.A.* III.7, namely that pleasure involves the activity (*energeia*) of either *perceptual* or *intellectual* cognitions. Note also the preposition “*pros*” expressing the relation of the cognition to the cognized object (but not necessarily its goodness!) in *N.E.* X.1174b15, 16, 19, 22, 29, 1175a2. *N.E.* VII does not explicitly state the dependence of pleasures on previous or simultaneous cognitions, but all the examples in the chapter strongly suggest this.

²¹ Similarly *N.E.* X, 1174a16–20, however without labeling them “simple” or “incidental pleasures” and associating them with bodily needs instead. Apart from this merely terminological difference the distinction is the same as that in Book VII.

does not allow for corresponding states of pain, because they somehow follow upon the *exercise* of a given nature (e.g., the exercise of our intellectual nature in practicing geometry),²² whereas the pleasantness of what *N.E.* VII calls things “incidentally pleasurable” is explained not by the exercise, but by means of the *restoration* of a previously impaired nature. Hence, these pleasures involve a preceding deficiency on the side of the animal. They therefore typically involve a previous sensation of pain, i.e., a felt lack in relation to the same object.

In distinguishing these two types of pleasure both discussions in the *Ethics* make use of a model that is prominent already in Plato. This is the restoration or replenishment model of the *Philebus* (31Aff.; cf. *Republic* 585D, *Tim.* 64Aff.). According to this model, the animal feels pleasure if the presence of an object contributes to the restoration of the bodily or emotional state of the animal towards its natural state, and pain if it contributes towards the destruction of this natural state. It is important to note that Aristotle does not adopt Plato’s replenishment model for his positive account of pleasure in *N.E.* VII and X. On the contrary, he criticizes it. The reason why he does so is that in his eyes Plato unduly generalized the replenishment model as a model for the common definition of *both* types of pleasure. Aristotle starkly disagrees with this. However, it is equally important to note that he does not reject the replenishment model *completely*. In both discussions he fully accepts some of the model’s implications as containing a valid analysis of the non-simple pleasures resulting from things incidentally pleasurable.²³ And here it is two things in particular which are of importance for us.

(i) Which incidentally pleasurable objects are pleasurable or painful for the animal is not determined by the sensation of certain objects alone, but by the *relation* of the bodily condition of the animal towards these objects. According to the bodily state of the animal, the same perception can result in pleasure, indifference, or pain.²⁴ Whether, for example, the tactile sensation resulting from the drinking of water will be pleasurable or not crucially depends on the combination of two factors, the tactile sensation itself and the bodily state of the animal. If the animal previously

²² *N.E.* VII, 1154b15–20; X, 1173b4–20. The thought behind this is presumably that natures, i.e., substances, unlike bodily states, do not have contraries (*Cat.* 3b24–33).

²³ Hence, the replenishment model does not positively contribute to Aristotle’s *definition* of pleasure (which is not a definition of pleasure *and* pain). It is a difficulty inherent in his account of pleasure that he insists on providing a common definition for both types of pleasure, simple and non-simple (see Frede [1996], p. 278, and [1997], pp. 426f.).

²⁴ *N.E.* X, 1176a5–15; VII, 1153a2–4; and elsewhere. “Bodily” should be taken in a wide sense here as entailing *all* states of the animal that have contrary states, i.e., not only bodily, but also emotional states.

had the painful sensation of a lack of liquid nourishment (thirst), the sensation will be pleasant, if not, it will be painful or indifferent.²⁵

(ii) Both of the *Ethics*' discussions insist that not only simple pleasures, but also their variable counterparts are *goods* for the animal (*N.E.* VII.13, 1153b1ff; X.2, 1172b36–1173a13). However, Aristotle does not identify pleasure and good in any simple way. How exactly the relation between good and pleasure is to be conceived is a question of Aristotle's metaphysics of pleasure and I do not intend to say anything about this here.²⁶ What is important is the fact that Aristotle is committed to the view that not only sensory pleasures but also the *objects* that cause them are *goods* for the animal, whereas the objects that cause the contrary states of pain are *bad* for it.²⁷ Hence, variable good and bad perceptible things are explicitly connected with pleasure and pain, and their good- or badness depends on their relation to the natural state of the animal (cf. *N.E.* VII.12, 1152b26ff; X.3, 1173b7ff.).²⁸

This suggests the following interpretation of the phrase "good or bad insofar as they are such" in *D.A.* III.7. "Good or bad" for the animal are those perceptible objects that contribute either towards the restoration of its natural state or towards its destruction. As we have seen, for Aristotle, pleasures are generally individuated by means of the *objects* that cause them. In the case of non-rational (non-simple) pleasures these objects are always objects whose cognition falls under the domain of sense-perception. Now, given *D.A.* III.7's project of providing a definition which is common to both pleasure *and* pain, and given that the objects

²⁵ This may partly account for Aristotle's language in naming these objects "pleasant *kata sumbebēkos*." It is that two things have to come *together* to make them pleasurable, namely the perceived objects and the bodily state of the animal. If the animal is not in a state of lack, the sensation of the object will not result in pleasure. The pleasure resulting from, say, the contemplation of a mathematical theorem, by contrast, can only result in pleasure for Aristotle. There is no pain associated with the cognition of these objects (and hence, as we have seen in the *Topics*, there is no pain associated with rational desire too [*Top.* 146b2]). Aristotle is aware of the fact that the exercise of the intellectual capacities can have effects which are detrimental and even painful. But he denies that this is *in virtue* of their being intellectual (see *N.E.* 1153a20).

²⁶ See Christopher Shields's contribution to this volume.

²⁷ *E.E.* 1235b30ff and similarly *Pol.* 1332a10–27 (and implicit in the discussions of pleasure in *N.E.* VII and X). Note that these passages explain the goodness of the relatively good things (*timi agatha*, including pleasurable things) by way of their capacity to either contribute to *providing* simple goods or removing obstacles for them. See also *Top.* 124a16–20 (*poiêtikon*); *Rhet.* 1362b8 (*poiêtika*); *N.E.* 1096b8–14 (*poiêtika ê phulaktika*).

²⁸ Apart from *Rhet.* 1369b33–35ff. (which seems to simply restate Plato's conception of pleasure; see Rapp [2002], *ad loc.*), there is nothing in Aristotle's writings which suggests that he ever abandoned or changed his views from *N.E.* VII and X, according to which (i) pleasures are not themselves cognitions, but dependent on cognitions; (ii) pleasures are either simple or non-simple; (iii) non-simple pleasures involve a restoration of a natural state; and (iv) non-simple pleasures do have contrary states of pain and are marked by their variability (see also *N.E.* 1118b14ff. and *E.E.* 1235b30ff.). On the contrary, he occasionally refers to these views elsewhere (*Top.* 106a36–b4; *De sensu* 443b19–30).

that cause pleasures are good for the animal and those that cause pain are bad, it would follow that the objects that cause pleasure and pain are good and bad respectively. But this is not quite what Aristotle says. He says “good or bad *insofar as they are such*.” But on the reading suggested here, there is a natural way of interpreting this as a necessary additional qualification. For, given that all pleasures, rational and non-rational, *generally* relate to what is good and all pains relate to what is bad, a further qualification is needed in order to separate out *non-rational* pleasure and pain. I suggest that this qualification is provided by the “insofar as they are such” clause. For what the clause emphasizes is that the things that are good or bad are not the things that are always either good or bad, but precisely those things that can be both *either* good or bad for the animal (variable goods).²⁹ The additional qualification “insofar” (*hêi*) in line 11 also further delimits the good- or badness of the perceived object.³⁰ The perceived object, in order to excite pleasure or pain, need not be good or bad for the animal without qualification, but only restore its natural state in a given respect; when it is *actually* good or bad for the animal in this given respect, it is pleasant or painful.³¹

6 NON-RATIONAL DESIRE

We now can turn to the definition of non-rational desire. This is part (c) of T4:

(c) and avoidance and pursuit (*orexis*) when actual are the same. And what is capable of pursuing (*to orektikon*)³² and what is capable of avoiding are not different,

²⁹ To judge from the substantive-making power of the Greek definite article, what Aristotle must have in mind in using the expression “*to agathon ê kakon*” in *D.A.* 111 is the *unity of the disjunction* of things good or bad. When, by contrast, he wants to address the items of the disjunction separately, he uses a second article, i.e., *to alêthes kai to pseudos* (biof.) and *tôi agathôi kai tòi kakôi* (brif.). To collectively address things either good or bad is, of course, not tantamount to speaking of variable goods, i.e., of the class of things that can be both either good or bad for the animal. This, I think, takes the additional qualification given in 431a11 “insofar as they are such” (note the plural *toi auta*).

³⁰ Charles also takes the “as such” clause as aspectually delimiting the perceived object, but then suggests we understand this aspect as the goodness of objects *insofar as they are pleasant* (Charles [2006], p. 27). This would make the object’s *being* pleasant the reason for its being *perceived as good* by the animals (which amounts to a sort of combination of an objectivist with a subjectivist account), but it would not explain *why* the objects are pleasant for the animal.

³¹ It would be open to Aristotle to account for phenomenal characteristics of pleasure, pain, and desire by means of a qualification of the perceptions involved in these states by the resulting (thermic) inner bodily motions (see *M.A.* 701b33–37).

³² Here, *orexis* and *orektikon* should not be taken in the generic sense (entailing pursuit and avoidance), but as referring to pursuit alone (see Loening [1903], p. 36n.4; Hicks [1907], pp. 555, 560; and Ross [1925], p. 376).

either from one another or from what is capable of sense-perception; but their being is different.

Aristotle identifies actual pursuit and avoidance. *Prima facie*, on this level of abstraction, this makes sense, since both of them seem to be motions of the ensouled body in reaction to either pleasurable or painful perceptions. These are, as I have argued, perceptions of objects that are either conducive or detrimental to the correspondence of the bodily–emotional state of the animal with its natural state. But Aristotle further identifies the *capacity* for non-rational desire with the capacity for sense-perception. Again, *prima facie* this does not seem to be unreasonable, given that he has previously (i) defined non-rational pleasure and pain as crucially involving relational states of the animal caused by the activity of sense-perception and (ii) pictured non-rational desire as their immediate *consequence*.

But how exactly are we to understand this identification? The only hint we are given is Aristotle's notorious formula "same, but different in being." To judge from a famous parallel in *Physics* III.3, 202a21–b22, this can be taken to relate in some sense to a difference in *direction*. The *Physics* used this formula in order to solve an *aporia* which results from the definition of motion (*kinêsis*) as involving the activity of the two relata of the agent/patient-relation (*Phys.* III.1 and III.2):³³ if *kinêsis* implies both, the activity of the agent and the activity of the patient, how can these two separate activities make up one and the same (rather than two separate) motions? Aristotle states the solution by way of an analogy. In the same way in which the road from Athens to Thebes is one and the same, while the way from Thebes to Athens is different in *direction* from the way from Athens to Thebes, so there is one underlying process in which these two relations, agent/patient and patient/agent, can simultaneously exist. Extensionally, they make up one and the same motion, but their definition (their being) is different.

What can this mean for the sameness-relation between pursuit and avoidance and the respective capacities (i)? And what can it mean for the sameness of the capacity for non-rational desire with the capacity for perception (ii)? Perhaps (i) is easier to deal with. Pursuit and avoidance are the same in that both have a direction. They are goal-directed motions of ensouled beings in reaction to certain perceptions, their goal being either the presence of a pleasurable object or the absence of a painful object, both of which relate positively to the nature of the animal. Their *capacities* can be regarded as identical, because natural capacities, for Aristotle,

³³ What follows is a heavily abridged summary of the *aporia*.

are always related to contrary states, which in this case means that the capacity to respond either positively or negatively to perceptions is one and the same capacity.³⁴ Pursuit and avoidance, in spite of having differing *directions*, then, both share in *directionality*, because they are motions oriented towards what is good or bad, i.e., towards the maintenance of the animal's nature. But how is the capacity for pursuit and avoidance supposed to be *identical* with the perceptual capacity (ii)? The analogy of the road between Athens and Thebes suggest that they somehow belong to the same *substrate*. What is this substrate? I think there are two relevant possibilities. Either the capacities for perceiving and desiring both belong to one and the same subject, the ensouled animal, or the capacities of pursuit and avoidance both belong to the perceptual capacity (in some way). As far as I can see, there are three good reasons to opt for the latter possibility.

First, the analogy of the road between Thebes and Athens seems to work better on this hypothesis.³⁵ This is so, because pursuit and avoidance do actually differ in direction, whereas the perceptual and the desiderative capacity do not; if at all, they differ in that desire has *directionality* and perception hasn't (there is no goal-directedness in perception as there is in desire). Second, if Aristotle did identify the desiderative with the perceptual capacity and both with the ensouled animal, he would thereby identify the ensouled animal with its desiderative capacity, which seems odd.³⁶ The third and most important reason is that on the latter option we get a non-trivial explanation of what non-rational desire *is*. For if the difference between the perceptual and desiderative capacities consists merely in the goal-directedness of the latter and the absence of goal-directedness in perception, the identification of the capacities here may mean that there is no psychic faculty responsible for desiring in the animal which is different

³⁴ It is, e.g., one and the same capacity that accounts for being healthy and being sick (*Metaph.* 1051a5–11). However, this is not to say that this capacity accounts for being healthy and sick *simultaneously* (which is impossible: *Metaph.* 1047b35–1048a24; 1051a11–13).

³⁵ Here are the two options:

- (i) road between Thebes and Athens :: ensouled animal
way from Thebes to Athens :: perceptual capacity
way from Athens to Thebes :: desiderative capacity;
- (ii) road between Thebes and Athens :: perceptual capacity
way from Thebes to Athens :: capacity of pursuing
way from Athens to Thebes :: capacity of avoiding.

³⁶ Ross (1925) thinks passage (c) says that the capacity of pursuit and avoidance are related to each other as they are to the perceptual capacity. And he rightly remarks that this is a "much more doubtful proposition" than the previous identification of pursuit and avoidance. But we can avoid this by taking the second identification as identifying both, pursuit *and* avoidance, with the perceptual capacity (which is also what the parallel in *Physics* III.2 suggests).

from its perceptual capacity. On this view, the desiring capacity would be nothing other than a capacity of the perceptual capacity of the animal to *under certain conditions*, or *in certain circumstances*, initiate a process with the goal of restoring its natural state. And these conditions or circumstances could be precisely the perception of those objects either conducive or detrimental to the natural state of the animal which, as we have seen, constitutes non-rational pleasure and pain.

I think Aristotle is indeed committed to this view. It situates non-rational desire within the broader hylomorphic analysis of animal activities, namely perception, non-rational pleasure and pain, and animal locomotion. Roughly, the view is this. The possession of the perceptual capacity is what makes an organism an animal. It is its nature and essence.³⁷ If the animal is in a physical condition in which its perceptual activity results in pleasure or pain, then it, by its own force and in the measure of its bodily capacities, strives towards the complete restoration of its natural state or avoids further damage to it. What is important is that what is ultimately responsible for these motions is not a psychic capacity separate from the perceptual capacity (a supposed primitive faculty of desire or a “bare” desire), but the perceptual capacity itself, or, to be more exact, the *animal* in possession of this capacity. This is so, because the perceptual capacity is the *nature* of the animal and the animal’s nature is what is ultimately responsible for its specific motions.³⁸ On this view, then, desiring is not a primitive psychic activity, but itself a *motion* of the ensouled animal prompted by the perception of either pleasurable or painful things.³⁹

One of the advantages of this view is that it allows us to understand in more concrete terms Aristotle’s claim that the soul is the efficient and the final cause of animal locomotion. As *efficient* cause the soul’s activity in perceiving provides the cognitive content which, according to the physical condition of the animal, can lead to non-rational pleasure or pain; pleasure or pain, on their part, are sufficient for desire (cf. the “when-ever,” *hotan*, in 431a9) and desire *can* (but need not) lead to the motion of the whole animal;⁴⁰ and as *final* cause the soul figures as the goal of

³⁷ For references, see Bonitz, *Ind. Ar.*, s.v. *aisthesis* 1a.

³⁸ For references, see Bonitz, *Ind. Ar.*, s.v. *phusis* 2.

³⁹ This matches well Aristotle’s repeated remarks about desire, according to which it is a *moved* mover (and hence a *motion*, *D.A.* 433b15; *M.A.* 700b35f., 703a4f., see also 701b33–702a1), whereas he insists that the soul is an *unmoved* mover. It also matches well *De sensu*’s claim, according to which pleasure and pain and desire are states of the ensouled animal common to body and soul and which come about either in *conjunction with* (*meta*), or *through* (*dia*) perception (436a6–b6).

⁴⁰ Depending on the bodily state of the animal (the intensity of the felt desire) and the presence of the bodily organs necessary for locomotion. For details of the process leading from desire to the motion of the whole animal see *M.A.* 6–8.

non-rational desire, since the latter aims at the restoration of the animal's nature which is nothing else than its perceptual capacity.

At first glance this may sound odd, since it is the impaired nature of the animal itself which is supposed to move in the direction of its own restoration.⁴¹ Conceptually, however, Aristotle's point in *D.A.* III.7, 431a8–14 is by no means unfamiliar. On the view presented here, he gives a somewhat circumstantial analysis of a homeostatic mechanism of self-maintenance on the level of perceivers: animals whose physical state does not match their natural state feel pleasure when they perceive things which restore this state and they thereby also feel desire for these things, i.e., they feel attracted towards them (and vice versa with harmful things, *D.A.* III.2, 414b1–6). And if these things happen to be at a distance, and the animal possesses the necessary bodily organs, it will also move in their direction and change its place.⁴²

So much for the broad outline of what I think is Aristotle's basic definition of non-rational pleasure and pain and desire.⁴³ I now turn to two details concerning the *way* in which the soul functions as efficient and final cause of the animal's local motions. These details are, I think, important and characteristic for this view. First, the perceptual soul is the efficient cause of the animal's desire and local motion as an *unmoved mover*. This is because the perceptual content which initiates the chain of events that can (but need not) lead to the motion of the whole animal is not affected in this process. Rather, it is the physical state of the animal in *relation* to the perceptual content, *reacting* in a certain way to it, which accounts for the motion in the proper sense (the initiating impulse for the pushing

⁴¹ This slightly paradoxical idea of a self-maintaining animal organism seems to be in the background also of the remarks in *N.E.* 1152b33–1153a2: "Further, since one kind of good is activity [i.e., the exercise of the unimpaired nature], the other a state [i.e., the natural state of an unimpaired nature *capable* of being exercised], the pleasures that restore the natural state are only incidentally pleasant – and the activity [involved in these restoring pleasures] is *in the appetites of the remaining state and nature* – since there are pleasures without pain and appetite, e.g., the activities of contemplation, the nature in such cases not lacking anything." Similarly *N.E.* 1154b18–20.

⁴² Stationary animals live in environments that provide them with the nourishment they need (*D.A.* 434b2). This explains why they don't have to move locally. But they still have desires (*epithumia*) for the things that nourish them (see above, n.18) and, presumably, also rudiments of local motion (*D.A.* 433b31–434a5). The explanation of animal motion seems in that sense an *extension* of a basic mechanism common to all animals, since it additionally requires the capacity to perceive distant objects and the possession of bodily organs necessary for locomotion.

⁴³ I think it is clear that the mechanism of which pleasure and pain and desire form a part can work only on the assumption that these things *objectively* restore the natural state of the animal (cf. *De sensu* 436b12–18; *H.A.* 589a2–9; and *N.E.* 1173a4f.); on the subjective account, by contrast, the continuously successful self-maintenance and preservation of animal species must appear an inexplicable fact.

and pulling of the limbs).⁴⁴ Second, the way in which the soul functions as a final cause of the animal's motion is not by providing a concrete goal for desire, but a *principle* for such goals. The non-rational desires animals have do not intentionally aim at the restoration of their nature. Rather, they strive for the restoration of their natural state *by* desiring concrete objects (goods for them). This is important because this means that the object of non-rational desire, the *orekton*, is always *both* a concrete object of which the animal is perceptually aware in one way or another *and* a means to the restoration of its natural state (and this the animal need not be aware of). There hence need be nothing in the intentional states of the animals or in the desired objects themselves that determines when and for how long animals desire them. It is the nature of the norm state of the animal's physical state *in relation to the object* which does that. What determines when a lion that eats a lamb stops eating it, is not an intention of the lion to stop, but the fact that his natural state in relation to food is restored (which is also the reason why the lion feels satiated).⁴⁵

I will stop here. Instead of providing a summary I now return to the *Topics* and ask whether the proposed interpretation of desire matches the criteria stated there, namely definition by correlative objects and "ultimate" ends. Given that Aristotle obviously must have thought that these criteria apply to the definitions of the three highest kinds of desire, appetitive desire (pleasure), wish (rational good), and spirited desire (presumably social recognition, or honor, broadly conceived⁴⁶), it is natural to ask why the definition in *D.A.* III.7 does not seem to make use of these correlates. I think this question can be easily addressed if we bring to mind Aristotle's project in this chapter to give a *general* definition of non-rational desire. Thus, he does not mention the correlates of *epithumia* and *thumos* (pleasure and honor), because he wants to give a definition which is common to *both*. For that reason he operates with a different and even

⁴⁴ For Aristotle, perceptions are accompanied with qualitative changes (*alloiôseis*). And it is of course these qualitative changes that are the per se causes of motion which physically trigger the mechanism leading to the locomotion of the animal (*M.A.* 701a4–6, a33–35, b18, b23, b29). However, Aristotle's point is not that perception does not involve a physical change, but that the activity of perception functions as an unmoved mover *insofar* as the same perception under different conditions (i.e., in a different physical state of the body), would not lead to locomotion. Causation by an unmoved mover does not require absolute immobility; unaffectedness *in relation* to the ensuing process suffices.

⁴⁵ Although lions don't give very good examples to illustrate this mechanism: Aristotle observes that they often eat too much, *H.A.* 594b17–20.

⁴⁶ Aristotle consistently distinguishes three kinds of desire (*D.A.* 414b2, 433a23ff.; *M.A.* 700b22), two of which (*epithumia* and *boulêsis*) are defined in the *Topics* passage. See also *D.A.* 414b5; *N.E.* 1113a15; and elsewhere. We do not possess a definition of *thumos* in the Aristotelian corpus.

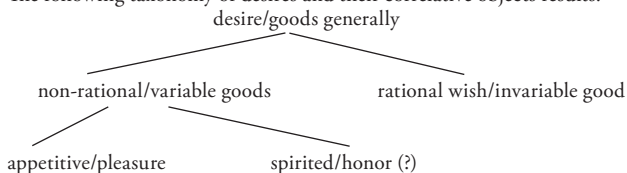
more abstract correlate. The relatum of non-rational desire “things that are either good or bad insofar as they are such” is on a higher level of generality than pleasure or honor (both goods). On the interpretation proposed here, this expression refers to all perceptible things which in different circumstances can sometimes be good and sometimes bad for the animal (variable goods). There is good reason to believe that this characterization matches the *sum* of possible objects of non-rational desires. This is so, because Aristotle repeatedly claims *exhaustiveness* for his tripartition of desire (e.g., *E.E.* II.10, 1225b24ff.; *D.A.* II.3, 414b1f.). Hence, if we subtract rational desire (*boulêsis*), which is correlated to what is invariably good, what remains *are* the variable goods. And given that there is no unified “higher” correlate common to and specific for *epithumia* and *thumos* (which are “highest” goals, after all), it makes very good sense to resort to particular objects and qualify them with abstract goodness or badness. Therefore, the definition in *D.A.* III.7 *mutatis mutandis* meets the definitional criteria established in the *Topics*.⁴⁷

PART III

7 TWO CHALLENGES

I think the interpretation of *D.A.* III.7, 431a8–14 proposed here provides a genuine explanation of non-rational pleasure and pain and desire. It explains how animal motion is caused by the animal soul as its nature and moving cause, without thereby losing its capacity for doing justice also to the complexities of animal behavior (thus preserving the intuition of Alexander’s art-model). The interpretation is in line with Aristotle’s hylomorphic account of animal behavior, in accordance with his other texts (ethical and scientific), and it meets the definitional criteria stated in the *Topics*. It does not tie pleasure and pain to specific intentional objects and it does not require basic mental capacities over and above the basic capacity to perceive perceptible qualities. These advantages do not come gratuitously, though. The interpretation crucially relies on reducing what

⁴⁷ The following taxonomy of desires and their correlative objects results:



is good or bad for the animal to its *nature*. Since this is not a reduction of the *concept* of goodness or badness to natural properties, there is no danger of any sort of naturalistic fallacy. But what this interpretation implies is that the things that are good or bad for the animal are in some sense *objectively* so. It thus faces a problem that all *objectivist* views of intentional states face, namely the problem of misrepresentation: how can it account for the observational datum that humans and also animals are capable of going *wrong* with respect to what objects they pursue or avoid? Another question naturally raised by this view concerns its consequences for animal and especially for human motivation: if our motions are determined by our natures in the way specified here, can the objective interpretation avoid biological determinism in relation to human motivation? To end, I briefly indicate how I think Aristotle can meet these challenges.

First, “good or bad,” *D.A.* III.7 is a very restricted notion. It does not refer to what is rationally (for Aristotle, in fact) good or bad for the animals, but only to what is capable of maintaining the physical conditions for the exercise of their natural functions. And here it is important that this need not always refer to the overall physical state of the animal or to its biological existence as a whole, but can also refer only to a particular *aspect* of it. This means that the animal will already feel perceptual pleasure about particular things insofar as it physically lacks these things. And it is only in this sense that these things have to be good for the animal: to be *in some respect* good for the animal’s bodily state (rather than being indifferent for it) is sufficient for sensory pleasure. Given this aspectuality of sensory pleasure there is no contradiction in that in some cases these goods might conflict with what is really (i.e., rationally or ethically) good for the animal,⁴⁸ or even with what is good for it according to other of its bodily needs.⁴⁹ So, the objective view does not deny the possibility of misrepresentation of good or bad things; it is committed only to the claim that for each desired objects there is *some respect* in which the object objectively restores the animal’s physical state.

⁴⁸ See, e.g., *E.E.* 1238b5–9. This includes things like health, etc.

⁴⁹ This does not rule out other aspects in which the same objects may be harmful to the animal, nor does it rule out overriding pleasures. Presumably, the pleasures resulting from exercising one’s own nature that Aristotle attributes to all animals could account for such overriding pleasures (*N.E.* 1154b21ff., 1175a10–21, using *zēn* instead of *physis*; *HA* 589a8f.). It is interesting in this context that *N.E.* 1111a30ff. mentions an appetite (which is desire for pleasure) for learning (*mathēsis*), although *Pol.* 1339a28ff. claims that the process of learning is connected with pain (*meta lupēs*). On the conception of overriding pleasures connected to the exercise of essential activities this is not a contradiction. Thus, *Rhet.* 1371a31–34 says that learning is pleasant, because it is a transition into one’s natural condition (*physis*).

Second, the account of pleasure and pain and desire in *D.A.* III.7, as all definitions in natural philosophy, is supposed to apply *for the most part* (*hôs epi to polu*). Thus, exceptions, as long as they don't constitute natural regularities, do not falsify the general rule. Hence, it is possible for Aristotle to claim that non-rational animals will *for the most part* achieve what is objectively good for them by pursuing what is pleasant and avoiding what is painful for them.

Difficult cases

(1) A rat feels pleasure in seeing a white and poisonous substance which resembles (smells or looks like) sugar, but will in fact kill the animal. For such cases it is important to be aware of the fact that, for Aristotle, these are already *complex* cases of pleasure and pain and desire, since their explanation crucially depends on his theory of mental representation. Accordingly, it is not the actual distal visual sensation of the white substance which is pleasurable to the rat, but the mental *anticipation* of its consumption, which is haptic (cf. *N.E.* III.10, 1118a18–23). This anticipation can be explained by means of associations with genuine sensations of pleasure or pain, namely by drawing on past perceptions (*phantasiai*) of things which did actually restore the animal's nature. What is important is that the basic and common mechanism described in *D.A.* 431a8–14 is not changed by this. The basic mechanism can easily be upgraded according to the cognitional capacities of the animal in question without itself undergoing any modification (on the level of representational capacities required by the rat's mental anticipations, for instance, representation of things somehow *as* pleasant or painful should already be possible⁵⁰).

(2) If we mix in sugar the rat will feel pleasure even in *consuming* the white substance. Here, it is open to Aristotle to say that the rat will do so not *qua* poisonous substance, but *qua* sugar.

(3) There is a natural substance whose consumption is both poisonous and pleasurable to the rat. Counter-question: are there such natural substances? And are there such substances in the natural habitat of the rat?

(4) If we manipulate the eating habits of the rat, e.g., by habituating it to consume great quantities of sugar, such that further consumption will result in the destruction of its health, the rat will feel pleasure in haptically perceiving something harmful to its bodily condition.

⁵⁰ Cf. *D.A.* 428b10–429a8; *M.A.* 701b17–23, 702a5f.; *Phys.* 247a8f.; *Rhet.* 1370a27–35. Though not as good or as bad, since only humans are capable of doing this (*Pol.* 1253a10–18).

Even in this case, there would be still a certain *respect* in which the further consumption of sugar will be good for the rat, namely in respect of lack of sugar. But the manipulation of eating habits seems problematical, since it seems to imply a change of the nature of the animal. This leads me to the other challenge facing my interpretation: namely, can it avoid biological determinism in relation to human motivation?

Biological determinism would be a threat to Aristotle only if his concept of nature was restricted to the specific biological nature of humans. But this is clearly not the case. Acquired habits and preferences do also count as natures (hence, they are sometimes called “second nature”). And they seem to do so irrespective of their moral value (e.g., *Rhet.* 1370a3–9; *N.E.* 1148b15ff.). Hence, it is possible for Aristotle to speak of a “bad nature” in *N.E.* 1154a33 (*phaulê phusis*). He occasionally even calls habituation a cause for a *phusis* (*N.E.* 1154a33f.; *De mem.* 452a27–30; see also *M.M.* 1203b31f.). But this might be a loose way of speaking. In any case, Aristotle does not think that there is a contradiction in acquiring a certain stable state or a motivational disposition by means of habituation on the one hand and calling this state a “nature” on the other.⁵¹ For him, biological nature and habituation (*ethos*, *ethizein*)⁵² work in similar ways, namely by means of a mechanism based on the sensation of non-rational pleasure and pain.⁵³ The difference is that biological nature does spontaneously what habituation has to achieve by means of a time-consuming effort of conditioning and repetition: whereas nature disposes us from birth to feel pleasure and pain in doing and feeling certain things, habituation “teaches” us to feel pleasure and pain in relation to things which previously were either indifferent or even painful to us (*Rhet.* 1369b15–18). This presupposes a certain *plasticity* of our biological nature such that we are capable of acquiring these states. The *N.E.* describes it thus:

The virtues therefore are engendered neither by nature nor against nature, but we are naturally *disposed* to receive them, and brought to completion by habit. (1103a23–26)

⁵¹ In his *Physics* Aristotle regards habituation as either perfecting nature (in the case of habituating in a virtuous way) or as a departure from it (in the case of acquisition of bad habits) (*Phys.* 246a13–17). His frequent contrasting of habit and nature seems primarily to point to the difference in the ways in which these states are acquired. *Probl.* 928b23–929a5 provides an interesting account of the mechanism underlying the acquisition of habits.

⁵² See Bonitz Ind. Ar., s.v. *ethos* and *ethizein*, and Morel (1997b), who pursues the question of how exactly to understand the supposed similarity between nature and habit.

⁵³ *N.E.* 1104b8–1105a17, 1152a29–31; *Phys.* 246b17–247a9; *E.E.* 1220a38ff.; *Pol.* 1332a39ff., 1334b5ff.; *Rhet.* 1370a3–9.

According to this passage, nature disposes us to receive virtues. How these in effect turn out to be depends on us, i.e., on how we are habituated, on our environment and upbringing. Our natural state does not determine these states, but provides only the plasticity or malleability of character which is required for the acquisition of virtue or vice. And this malleability makes it possible for humans to determine to a certain degree their own “natural” states. It is clear that this regards only such states, dispositions, and preferences which are not already predetermined by our biological nature. But within this range we are free to determine ourselves with regard to what things towards which we non-rationally feel pleasure and pain. And there is overwhelming evidence that Aristotle thought that this mechanism applies not only to humans, but to animals as well.⁵⁴ This, I think, shows that even for animals there is no threat of a strong biological determinism in Aristotle. Additional stable motivational dispositions can be acquired by humans and animals. Biological nature provides only the *capacity* to form these dispositions and not the dispositions themselves. It does not predetermine their preferences in every detail, but leaves a certain range of self-determination in respect of what is good or bad for them.

The question as to *what extent* living beings are determined by their biological nature, for Aristotle, is, presumably, a question of *degree*. His continuist convictions in regard to biological species are well known.⁵⁵ They also form the background for his account of animal and human behavior. Or this is what I am suggesting by arguing that there is *one* basic explanation for the mechanism of biological self-preservation common to *all* perceivers in Aristotle, including humans. Basic and common as it is, the account does, of course, not meet the specificities of non-rational motivation in the human case. It does not come as a surprise, therefore, that in the immediate sequel to the common and basic account of non-rational pleasure and pain and desire in *D.A.* 431a8–14 Aristotle applies this account to the special case of the thinking soul in 431a14–16.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Not only in that animals are habituated by humans, but animals also habituate each other (*H.A.* vi and vii contain many such observations, e.g., *H.A.* 567a6 and 611a20).

⁵⁵ Cf., e.g., *H.A.* 588a19ff.

⁵⁶ This is the text: “For the soul which is capable of thinking the *phantasmata* are like *aisthēmata* [i.e., like that which the sensitive soul pursues or avoids if pleasant or painful] and whenever it [i.e., the thinking soul] affirms or denies a good or a bad thing, it avoids or pursues.” What is done here that is a connection is established between the objects of thought and the mechanism introduced in 431a8–14. This is achieved by equating the representational objects of perception, the *phantasmata*, with the objects of perception which, if painful or pleasant, are sufficient for desire.

Without going into any detail here it can be said that this application (see also later in 431b1–12) is a *building upon* his basic and common account rather than the introduction of a new and independent account. Aristotle introduces *further* cognitive capacities in addition to perception (thought and *phantasia*) and explains how they work *on the basis* of the common mechanism (which is only upgraded by thought and *phantasia*, not itself changed). A *full* account of Aristotle's notion of the psychological mechanism underlying the acquisition of ethical virtue would presumably have to introduce even more qualifications. For, in his *Ethics*, he not only attributes a crucially important role to the cognitive possibility of misrepresentation, i.e., the divergence of the appearing good (*phainomenon agathon*) from what is really good for us,⁵⁷ but he also thinks that the range of self-determination in respect of what is good or bad for us is far greater in humans than in animals and with this our ability to shape our own behavior.⁵⁸ And even though we do not possess an anthropology or a scientific theory specific for human behavior in Aristotle apart from what he says in his *Ethics*, I trust that his basic and common theory of animal motivation is open to such extensions. Indeed, this is what Aristotle's continuist approach towards the explanation of natural things calls for. However, given the wide scope of the *De Anima*, we shouldn't assume that the additional representational capacities involved in *human* motivation are already part of its basic and common account of non-rational pleasure and pain and desire.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ See, e.g., *N.E.* 1113a22–24, 1113a33–b2; *D.A.* 433a26–29; *M.A.* 700b29; and elsewhere.

⁵⁸ See *Pol.* 1334a4–9. For a stimulating discussion of the continuity of character traces and moral behavior in humans and animals see Lennox (1999).

⁵⁹ What I have argued here, namely that Aristotle's account of desire is embedded in his general hylomorphic explanation of animal behavior, makes comparisons with other conceptions difficult and potentially misleading. The customary classification into "representational" vs. "Humean" concepts of desire certainly does not fit the case, since, on the account given here, desire is a psychophysical motion which is both continuous with perception and informed and prompted by it. It is neither a distinctive representational state (a cognition of goodness) nor an "original existence" or "bare" desire.

Non-rational desire and Aristotle's moral psychology

Giles Pearson

Aristotle's account of desire is extremely suggestive and worth considering in greater detail. There are a number of passages that warrant close consideration, and part of my goal here is to provide a detailed analysis of a key one: *N.E.* VII.6, 1149a25–b3.¹ This passage is interesting in its own right, but when placed alongside some other key texts, it becomes significant for our understanding of non-rational desire in Aristotle's moral psychology, in particular, concerning: (i) the ways in which non-rational desires can obey reason; (ii) the role various cognitive capacities have in the formation of non-rational desires; (iii) what it is that makes a desire count as “non-rational”; and (iv) the status of non-rational desires in virtue. My chapter has two parts. In the first, I consider the *N.E.* VII.6 passage in detail (sections 1–3); in the second, I address, in relation to it, the broader issues just mentioned (sections 4–7).

Before I begin, I should note that Aristotle divides desire, “orexis”, into three kinds: “epithumia” (variously translated “appetite,” “desire,” “bodily desire”), “thumos” (“spirit,” “anger,” “passion,” “temper”), and “boulêsis” (“wish,” “volition,” “rational desire”), and holds that epithumia and thumos are non-rational, whereas boulêsis is rational.² To avoid potentially confusing translations, I shall leave these key terms (plus epithumia's

¹ Some discussion of this passage can be found in (among others) Aspasius (1889), pp. 127–28; Stewart (1892), pp. 182–84; Burnet (1900), pp. 313–14; Burnyeat (1980), p. 84; Charles (1984a), pp. 96, 179, (2011), §5; Cooper (1999e), pp. 260–62; Broadie (2002), pp. 56–57; Lorenz (2006), pp. 191–95; Grönroos (2007), pp. 261–62; and Natali (2009a), pp. 115–18. I have of course benefited from these discussions, but aim to offer a more systematic analysis; and a number of key points of disagreement will be registered in the process.

² Orexis divides into the three species mentioned: *E.E.* II.7, 1223a26–27, II.10, 1225b24–26; *De An.* II.3, 414b2; *De Motu.* 6, 700b2 (also *M.M.* 12, 1187b36–37); cf. *De An.* III.9, 432b5–6. (*E.E.* II.10, 1225b24–26 suggests these exhaust the types of orexis: “that [choice] is not orexis is clear; for then it would be either boulêsis or epithumia or thumos; for no one desires [*oregetai*] anything without undergoing one of these.”) Epithumia and thumos as non-rational, boulêsis as rational: *De An.* III.9, 432b5–6; *Rhet.* I.10, 1369a1–4; cf. *N.E.* III.1, 1111a24–26, III.2, 1111b12–13; *E.E.* II.10, 1225b27; *De An.* III.10, 433a23–26.

plural: *epithumiai*) untranslated (and unitalicized). I shall do the same with “*akrasia*” (“incontinence,” “lack of self-control”), “*enkrateia*” (“continence,” “self-control”) and “*phantasia*” (“imagination,” “appearance”) for the same reason.³

PART I *N.E.* VII.6, 1149A25–B3

N.E. VII.6 forms part of Aristotle's discussion of *akrasia*. Aristotle thinks that *akrasia* in the strict sense is tied to pleasure-based *epithumiai*, in particular *epithumiai* connected to the sphere of temperance: i.e., those for the tactile pleasures involved in eating, drinking, and sex. However, he also recognizes other kinds of *akrasia*, which he characterizes as *akrasia* “with respect to” some X, where X is some other feature one could be *akratic* about, e.g., money or honor (*N.E.* VII.4, 1147b32–34). One such kind is *akrasia* with respect to *thumos*, and in *N.E.* VII.6 Aristotle provides a number of considerations supporting the notion that succumbing to this kind of *akrasia* is less disgraceful than giving in to *akrasia* in the strict sense. The passage I am concerned with is the first of these. In the Revised Oxford translation (ROT), it runs as follows (leaving my key terms untranslated, and with bracketed letters inserted for subsequent reference):

[A] *Thumos* seems to listen to reason (*logos*) to some extent, but to mishear it, as do hasty servants who run out before they have heard the whole of what one says, and then muddle the order, or as dogs bark if there is but a knock at the door, before looking to see if it is a friend; so *thumos* by reason of the warmth and hastiness of its nature, though it hears, does not hear an order, and springs to take revenge. [B] For reason or *phantasia* informs us that we have been insulted or slighted, and *thumos*, reasoning as it were (*hōsper sullogisamenos*) that anything like this must be fought against, boils up straightway; while *epithumia*, if reason or perception merely says that an object is pleasant, springs to the enjoyment of it. [C] Therefore *thumos* obeys reason in a sense, but *epithumia* does not. [D] It is therefore more disgraceful; for the man who is *akratic* in respect of *thumos* is in a sense conquered by reason, while the other is conquered by *epithumia* and not by reason. (1149a25–b3)

The first point to consider is what cases of *akrasia* Aristotle has in mind (section 1). We can then ask how *thumos* is related to reason in a way that *epithumia* is not (section 2), and why this makes *thumotic akrasia* less disgraceful than *epithumotic akrasia* (section 3).

³ For a nice summary of some of the disputes surrounding Aristotle's notion of *phantasia*, see Caston (2006), pp. 331–35.

1 *What cases of akrasia does Aristotle have in mind?*

One might naturally think that Aristotle envisages the following type of case:

(1) The agent holds that he should not ϕ .⁴

But (2) the prospect of ϕ -ing arouses the agent's non-rational desire (thumos or epithumia).

(3) The agent succumbs to his non-rational desire and ϕ s.

In this way, owing to his thumos or epithumia, the agent acts against what he believes he should do, and hence akratically. In the thumos version, although the agent recognizes that he has been insulted or slighted, he nevertheless holds that he should not take revenge in this instance (since, e.g., doing so would be strategically unsound⁵); however, his thumos boils up and urges him to take action, and he succumbs to the desire, and acts akratically. In the epithumia case, the agent holds that he should not pursue some particular pleasure (e.g., not have the second dessert), but his epithumia becomes aroused at the prospect of the pleasure, and the agent succumbs to the epithumia, and acts akratically.⁶

However, there is a problem with this reading: strictly speaking, Aristotle does not claim that reason or perception says that something *will be* pleasant and therefore epithumia urges the pursuit of it. Rather, he states that when reason or perception says that something *is* pleasant, an epithumia is generated.⁷ This suggests that the agent is already encountering the thing in question *before* the epithumia is aroused. But then (2) would

⁴ I deliberately formulate (1) with the somewhat vague "holds," rather than (say) (1*): The agent has chosen not to ϕ . Aristotle acknowledges two kinds of akratic, the impetuous and the weak, and claims that the impetuous do not deliberate or form a choice (e.g., *N.E.* vii.7, 1150b19–22, vii.8, 1151a1–5); so (1*) would be overly restrictive. (1) aims to admit both kinds of akratic (following, e.g., *N.E.* vii.8, 1151a20–26; cf. *N.E.* v.9, 1136b6–9, vii.3, 1147a25–b5): each of these agents still holds that he should not do what he akratically does (although this will be spelt out differently in the two cases). The importance of Aristotle's distinction between two kinds of akratic agent is emphasized by Charles in esp. his (2007), (2009), and (2011). Cf. also Taylor (2006), pp. 189–90, and Price (2006), p. 250n.15.

⁵ Cf. Odysseus strategically resisting his angry desire to punish the suitors of Penelope in Homer's *Odyssey*, xx.1ff., referred to by Plato at *Rep.* iv 441b (cf. iii 390d).

⁶ Cooper (1999e) seems to read the epithumia example as about prospective pleasures in this way: "the liking for pleasure, as such, that constitutes an appetite is [...] its own evaluative outlook that appetite puts together with the factual premise that something pleasant *is to be had* when it rushes forward to gratification" (p. 261, my italics).

⁷ The "arousal" of epithumia is represented by the expression *horma pros tēn apolausin*, which the ROT translates: "springs to the enjoyment of it." More literal translations are offered by, e.g., Crisp (2000), *ad loc.*: "*it rushes off to enjoy it*" (cf. also Broadie and Rowe [2002], *ad loc.*), and Irwin (1999), *ad loc.*: "*it rushes off for gratification*". It might also be translated: "epithumia ... urges [one] on towards the enjoyment [of it]."

not be quite right for the epithumia case: it would not be the prospect of ϕ -ing that arouses the epithumia, but ϕ -ing itself. I suppose one might be inclined to resist this and take Aristotle's "is pleasant" as a loose way of referring to a future pleasure. But it seems reasonable to consider whether we can make sense of the text at face value as envisaging the agent *already* enjoying or taking pleasure in something, *and then* his epithumia being aroused for the activity to continue or progress in certain ways.

How might this work? Consider happily married Smith, who believes it would never be right to cheat on his wife. Suppose Smith is invited to dinner by his incredibly attractive boss, Ms. Scarlet, in order to discuss the new contract their company has just won. The wine is flowing and, after dinner, Smith and Scarlet sit down on the couch to look over the portfolio. As they are reading, Scarlet's hand slips on to Smith's leg, perhaps innocently. Smith turns to her, and Scarlet promptly plants a sensuous kiss on Smith's lips. Smith has to admit that the experience is enjoyable: Scarlet is incredibly attractive after all. But what about the fact that he holds that he should not cheat on his wife? Unfortunately, the pleasure is too much for him. His desire for more such pleasure is aroused and, as it were, urges him to continue. Smith gives way to his newly formed appetite, and pursues the sensuous liaison with his boss.

In Aristotle's terminology, we could say that when perception tells Smith that something is pleasant (the hand on his leg, the sensuous kiss), an epithumia is aroused, and Smith is motivated to pursue the pleasurable experience still further. Epithumia is, in this instance, still concerned with future enjoyment, but it is formed in response to a currently encountered pleasure. The form of this example is clearly generalizable. All we require is agents to come across some pleasure that they hold they should not indulge in, and then, when confronted by the pleasure, form a desire for further continuation (or development) of it, and (since they are akratic) follow the desire and pursue the continuation (or development) of the pleasure (rather than, e.g., recoil from it).

Thus construed, the epithumia case employs a revised version of the second premise:

- (1) The agent holds that he should not ϕ .
- But (2*) the agent (unexpectedly) encounters himself ϕ -ing, and this arouses his non-rational desire to ϕ still further.
- (3) The agent succumbs to his non-rational desire and ϕ s (still further).

If he had this in mind, why might Aristotle have employed such a case of epithumotic akrasia, rather than one with prospective pleasures? The reason, I suspect, would be that it more naturally indicates a key difference

between his two non-rational desires. With (2), the values for ϕ would have to be “take pleasure (in some X),” in the epithumia case, and “get revenge (for some Y),” in the thumos case. This would result in the following formulation: the agent believes that he should not take pleasure in X/get revenge for Y, and yet the prospect of pleasure/revenge arouses his epithumia/thumos, and he succumbs. However, so construed, epithumia and thumos seem to be parallel in just the way that Aristotle seems intent to resist.

If we instead construe the epithumia case with (2*), the difference between the two desires is more perspicuous. For, whereas one can unexpectedly encounter something enjoyable and that alone lead to an epithumia, the parallel with thumos does not hold. Even if it is possible to encounter oneself unexpectedly taking revenge, that *on its own* cannot arouse a thumos, since thumos, unlike epithumia, essentially makes reference to *something besides* the object of desire (revenge); namely, the event or action (e.g., slight or insult) that makes revenge seem desirable in the first place.⁸ The schema with (2*) represents a case in which the epithumia is formed simply in response to an encounter with the object of the epithumia (something pleasant), but thumos cannot operate this way. The reason for this is that epithumia is one-placed: one seeks some enjoyable A; whereas thumos is two-placed: one seeks revenge A for the sake of some insult/slight B. Aristotle will exploit this difference in what follows.

2 *How is thumos related to reason in a way that epithumia is not?*

There is potentially more than one question here: (a) In what way does thumos listen to but mishear reason, or hear but not hear an order (section [A] of the passage); (b) In what way is it “as if” thumos involves reason ([B]); (c) In what way does thumos obey reason “in a sense” ([C]); and (d) how can the thumotic akratic be said to be “in a sense” conquered by reason ([D])? We will see that the answers to these questions overlap in significant ways; nevertheless, it is helpful if we proceed by treating them as distinct.

⁸ Of course, this difference *can* be represented by a schema that employs prospective pleasures. We could say that an epithumia can be formed simply in response to the prospect of pleasure, whereas a thumos cannot be formed simply in response to the prospect of revenge. But if a reader just considers the schema with (2), this difference is not pushed upon him, and he may simply fail to notice that thumos involves a tacit reference to some slight/insult. Employing (2*) in the epithumia case, by contrast, invites one to consider whether thumos could fit that kind of schema, and, given that it cannot, notice a key difference between the desires.

(a) *In what way does thumos listen to but mishear reason, or hear but not hear an order?*

In answer to this question, John Cooper claims that Aristotle thinks that thumos “leaps by anticipation to a conclusion to which reason might be led, but is not in fact led in this case, and does so from a premise or premises that it shares with, indeed has in some sense itself obtained from, reason.”⁹ On Cooper’s view, the crucial shared premise is the following evaluative proposition (EP):

EP: Insults and slights are bad and offensive things, normally to be resisted or retaliated against because they represent a disregard for the value of one’s own person that no self-respecting person can share, or act as if he did by accepting slights meekly.¹⁰

On Cooper’s reading, thumos puts this evaluative outlook, which it shares with reason, together with the information that one has been slighted, and draws the conclusion that it is right to fight back. The result is nevertheless akratic because although sharing thumos’s offense at the insult, “reason in that instance regards it as improper to react on the spot.”¹¹

This cannot be quite right. EP refers to insults and slights as things that are *normally* to be resisted or retaliated against. The “normally” here is crucial if the premise is to be accepted by reason, since it allows reason to maintain that some cases (e.g., the one at hand) are *not* normal and need one to withhold from retaliation (thus creating the possibility of akrasia). But it seems unlikely that thumos would allow that when one has been slighted there are cases in which one should not resist or retaliate. From its evaluative perspective, there is nothing else to go on that could permit such a restriction: thumos just is the non-rational part of us that represents this value. Thus the evaluative premise that thumos represents would presumably be EP without the “normal” restriction.¹² But then EP is not really a shared premise after all. It is a premise that reason must hold, but thumos cannot.

How, then, should we understand Aristotle’s claim that thumos seems to listen to reason to some extent, but mishear it? In [A] Aristotle helpfully provides two analogies to illuminate his point, one about a hasty

⁹ Cooper (1999e), p. 261. ¹⁰ Cooper (1999e), p. 261. ¹¹ Cooper (1999e), p. 261.

¹² This does not itself entail that every time we recognize that we have been slighted a thumos *must* be generated; perhaps, e.g., we are exceptionally calm on this occasion (see section 7 below). Nevertheless, *when* a thumos is aroused it is unequivocal and unconditional, and so represents EP without the “normal” restriction. This is so even if it gets overruled or calmed by reason: so much as it gets calmed, so much does the uncompromising evaluative concern which it represents recede.

servant, the other about a dog barking when there is a knock at the door; they seem to function in the following way:

| Subject | Full reason (with the part the subject observes in bold) | Information | Result |
|---------------|---|---|---|
| Hasty servant | When given an order by your master, go and fulfill it , but make sure you've heard the <i>whole</i> order before you do so | Hear an order [but in fact not the whole order] | Run to get the order heard [and so muddle it, or get an incomplete order] |
| Dog | When someone knocks at the door, bark at it , but not if the person knocking is a friend | Hear a knock at the door | Bark at the door [whether or not it is a friend] |

The complete instruction in the “Full reason” column represents the command of the agent’s rational part, or what “right reason” (*orthos logos*) would state.¹³ The section of this in bold is the part of the full reason the agent in question actually employs. The square brackets provide further explanatory features of the case in question, but are not part of the agent’s awareness.

Now, since thumos is meant to be parallel to these cases, we should presumably understand it as follows (where the “result”, in this case, is the command that the agent’s thumotic part issues to him):

| | | | |
|--------|---|--------------------|--|
| Thumos | If you have been slighted, get revenge for that (because slights ought to be resisted) , but only if the situation warrants it all things considered | I’ve been slighted | Take revenge! [failing to take into account whether it is warranted all things considered] |
|--------|---|--------------------|--|

How is my interpretation different from Cooper’s? Cooper claimed that thumos leaps by anticipation to a conclusion that reason might have been led to, by a premise it shares with reason (EP). I do not accept that thumos *shares* a premise with reason (that the latter overrides in this situation); instead I hold that it operates with only *part* of the full reason, i.e., acknowledges only part of the complete instruction reason provides.¹⁴ It

¹³ That is, insofar as the rational part in virtuous, akratic, and enkratic agents will motivate in accordance with (or rather *in virtue of*) what Aristotle calls “right reason” (see, e.g., *N.E.* 11.2, 1103b32–34, 11.1, 1138b18–34, 11.13, 1144b21–30; and, for some discussion, see Gómez-Lobo [1995]).

¹⁴ Cf. Lorenz (2006), p. 193.

“listens to but mishears”/“hears but does not hear” reason because it has not in fact grasped the full instruction reason proffers.

The fact that thumos listens to reason in this way is meant to distinguish it from epithumia, which does not. So we should ask why epithumia could not similarly be represented as acknowledging part of the complete instruction of reason, and so count as listening to but mishearing it.¹⁵ It seems it could be portrayed as follows:

| | | | |
|-----------|--|------------------------------|--|
| Epithumia | Get pleasant things, but only if doing so is consistent with nobility and health (cf. <i>N.E.</i> III.11 1119a11–20). | Here's something pleasant | Enjoy it! [failing to take into account whether it is consistent with nobility and health] |
|-----------|--|------------------------------|--|

But, if so, how is epithumia different to the other cases? As I see it, if we look at the four examples, we can see that the difference between the servant, dog, and thumos cases, on the one hand, and epithumia, on the other, is that the former involve a *complex* or *structured* part of the full reason, whereas epithumia does not. In the first three cases, the part of the full reason in bold, the part that the subject in question actually observes, is of the form: “If/when A, do B!”, whereas with epithumia we just have: “Get A!”

It might be objected that the lack of complexity in the epithumia case is just a feature of the way I have portrayed it. Perhaps the section in bold for this desire should be characterized as “**when you come across something pleasant, get it!**”, and then it would be just as “complex” as the others? However, the complexity I have in mind is not simply a matter of phrasing. The revised description of epithumia fits the following characterization: “when you come across A, get A!”, but the other cases do not fit this model (as if, when I come across a slight, I should get [more]

¹⁵ Lorenz (2006), p. 193, fails to consider this possibility, and it seems to be an objection to his account as written. He does claim: “while anger in a mature and ordinarily conditioned human being depends on, and gives expression to, a general evaluative outlook that derives from, and perhaps is sustained by, correct reason, there is no way at all in which appetite’s general evaluative outlook derives from, or otherwise depends on reason” (p. 194). To assess this would require knowing more about the “deriving”/“sustaining” envisaged, but epithumia, no less than thumos, can *share* an evaluative outlook with reason: “the appetitive element (*epithumêtikon*) in a temperate man should harmonize with reason; for the noble is the mark at which both aim, and the temperate man has appetites (*epithumiai*) for the things he ought, as he ought, and when he ought, and this is what reason directs” (*N.E.* III.12, 1119b15–18). If such an agent comes across something that arouses an epithumia, then, since his epithumiai and reason are in line, his rational side would think it appropriate to pursue the pleasure as well.

slights; when a dog encounters a knock at the door, it should knock at the door itself; or when the servant is given instructions, he should seek [more] instructions). Instead, the other cases have the following structure: “when you come across *A* [a slight, door-knocking, instructions], do *B* [seek revenge, bark, get the order]!” In moving from *A* to a distinct *B* in this way, rather than simply trying to get *A*, these cases qualify as “complex” or “structured” in the sense I am envisaging (this relates to my comments at the end of section 1, and should become clearer in section 2[b]).

If this is right, it suggests that a desire will not count as “listening to (but mishearing) reason” merely by possessing part of the full reason; rather, in order to qualify as such it must have access to a complex or structured part of that reason in the sense specified.

(b) *In what way is it “as if” thumos involves reason?*

In [B] Aristotle contrasts the formation of a thumos with that of an epithumia. With thumos he distinguishes the following components: (i) informational input, “*I*”; (ii) an “as if” reasoning/syllogizing step, which I will refer to as a “quasi-reasoning” stage or “*QR*”; and (iii) a command/conclusion that is put to the agent as a result of the process, “*C*.” With epithumia, we also have *I* and *C* stages, but there is no *QR* step. If we use superscripts “*i*” and “*e*” to indicate whether *I* or *C* pertains to either thumos or epithumia, with thumos we get:

(*I*ⁱ): {Reason, phantasia}: “I’ve been insulted/slighted.”

(*QR*): “Anything like this must be fought against.”

(*C*ⁱ): “Seek revenge!”¹⁶

Whereas with epithumia we have:

(*I*^e): {Reason, perception}: “*X* is pleasant.”

(*C*^e): “Enjoy *X*!”¹⁷

Thumos is thus represented as employing a major premise, *QR*, in order to move from its minor premise, *I*ⁱ, to its command/conclusion, *C*ⁱ; whereas with epithumia the move from *I*^e to *C*^e is direct.¹⁸

¹⁶ In the passage, *C*ⁱ is represented by “springs to take revenge”/“boils up straightway,” *C*^e by “springs to the enjoyment of it” (see n.7). I take these phrases to indicate fully aroused desires, which I represent as commands issued by the desires. Contra Price (1995), p. 107, I think there is a modal “must” with both desires, not just thumos; cf. *De Motu*. 7, 701a32: “I must drink’ (*poteon moi*), says epithumia.”

¹⁷ Note the structure of the epithumia would still be the same if *I*^e stated “*X* would/will be pleasant.”

¹⁸ Lorenz (2006), pp. 192–93, claims “there is good reason to think that appetite can, on Aristotle’s view, be represented by a practical syllogism no less than the activity of spirit”; e.g., “reason,

Let me address three further points. First, it should be acknowledged that “reason” (*logos*) seems to have shifted its signification from [A] to [B]. In [A], “reason” amounts to a rational *motivation*, the full command of the rational part of the soul, or what “right reason” would assert. In [B], by contrast, “reason” seems to signify something *informational*, a faculty or capacity that can provide information leading to the arousal of a non-rational desire. I think that we should just take this shift at face value. It seems clear from the context that “reason” in [A] must amount to a rational motivation, and equally clear that the natural interpretation of “reason” in [B], when placed alongside *phantasia* and perception, amounts to something informational like “thought” (*dianoia*), “belief” (*doxa*), or “thinking” (*noêsis*).¹⁹ We see both uses of *logos* in Aristotle (see, e.g., *N.E.* I.13, 1102b16–1103a1 for the first, and *De An.* III.3, 427b13–14, 428b22–24, for the second), and in *De Motu Animalium* he employs *noêsis* in an evidently parallel way to *logos* in [B], when he claims “the proximate cause for movement is desire, and this comes to be either through perception or through *phantasia* or through thought (*noêsis*)” (7,701a34–36). I shall return to the significance of the fact that *epithumia* and *thumos* can be brought about by various cognitive capacities in section 5 below.

phantasia, or perception indicate some source of pleasure; and appetite, as if having reasoned that this sort of thing must be pursued, at once drives the person towards enjoyment.” But [B] shows that Aristotle thinks that there is a crucial difference between *thumos* and *epithumia* precisely owing to the former's *QR* stage, so Lorenz must have missed something. (I do not think *De Motu.* 7, 701a32–36, cited by Lorenz, supports his view, but cannot argue this now.) In fact, Lorenz's syllogism is not parallel, since it begins with the thing sought, not, as with *thumos*, the thing reacted to. This would be as if Aristotle wrote: “reason/*phantasia* indicates some source of *revenge*, and *thumos*, as if reasoning that this sort of thing ought to be pursued, drives one towards it”; but in fact he has in mind quasi-reasoning bridging a gap between two distinct things (slights → revenge; knocks at the door → barks; etc.). Closer would be: “reason/*phantasia* states that X is, e.g., sweet, and *epithumia*, reasoning as it were that anything like this must be pursued, drives one to enjoy X” (cf. *N.E.* VII.3, 1147a31–35). To distinguish the quasi-reasoning in *thumos* from this, Aristotle would have to claim that slights relate to *thumos* in a way that sweetness does not to *epithumia*. This is not implausible: *thumos* is precisely concerned with resisting slights and insults, but *epithumia* is not straightforwardly concerned with sweet things (one might have a savory tooth), but with what provides (bodily) pleasure, whatever this may be.

¹⁹ Natali (2009b), pp. 116–18, seems to assume that Aristotle must mean the same thing by *logos* in all parts of the passage, and then takes [B] to show that *logos* is simply informational (cf. Aspasius [1889], 127–28, although Aspasius surreptitiously reverts to a different notion of *logos* at a crucial point: 128, 1). This reading is unattractive for several reasons; for instance, (i) in [B] Aristotle allows that reason can generate an *epithumia*, but in [C] only *thumos* is said to obey/follow reason (Natali [2009b], p. 118, seems tempted to delete *logos* at 1149a35, but nothing in the MSS supports this); (ii) Aristotle claims that *phantasia* can generate a *thumos*, and yet seems to hold that *thumos* follows reason in general, not just when reason has led to its formation. Such points inclined Stewart (1892), p. 183, to assert that Aristotle “immediately contradicts himself” in his use of *logos*; but, as Burnet (1900), p. 314, saw, Aristotle can simply be employing *logos* in two different ways.

Second, it is important to note what is represented as the *desire* in both cases. In neither case is *I* said to form part of the desire. *I* is specifically characterized as something that the desire *responds to*: reason/phantasia/perception provides us with some information, we are told, and an epithumia or a thumos is aroused in response. However, with thumos, both *QR* and *C^r* are ascribed to the desiderative process, whereas with epithumia, since we do not have a *QR* stage, only *C^r* is represented as the desire. This is why Aristotle states that thumos seems to engage in some kind of syllogizing: i.e., to account for its move from *I^r* to *C^r*, whereas since epithumia issues *C^e* on the basis of *I^e* alone, no such stage is required in its case.

Third, we should address why Aristotle maintains that thumos involves only quasi-reasoning, not reasoning proper. On the basis of some information, thumos employs a major premise, and draws a conclusion. Why think of this as only “as if” reasoning? The most likely answer, I think, is that since thumos is a non-rational desire (see n.2 for references), Aristotle believes that it must in principle (even if not in every instance, see below) be a desire that non-rational animals, lacking reason, can also undergo. But if thumos involved an explicit process of reasoning in its very formation, this would clearly be impossible. Thumos, then, does not involve actual reasoning from *I^r* to *C^r* via *QR*; rather, since it invariably moves from *I^r* to *C^r*, it *seems* as though it incorporates a chain of reasoning involving *QR*. The reasoning process is only implicit in the structure of the desire, in the evaluation it represents, not something that needs to be cognized by the creature undergoing it.²⁰ Indeed, the creature may in principle be incapable of grasping such a universal premise. This, in fact, is the case with all non-rational animals, since they, in Aristotle’s view, have no universal beliefs, but only phantasia and memory of particulars (*N.E.* vii.3, 1147b3–5).

²⁰ This also naturally fits a more literal rendering of *hōsper sullogisamenos* at 1149a33, i.e., “as if having reasoned,” rather than ROT’s “reasoning as it were.” Burnet (1900), p. 314, mistakenly ascribes to thumos an actual process of deliberation (cf. Charles [1984a], p. 96). Relatedly, Broadie (1991), p. 269, mistakenly asserts that thumos has a “distinctively human function.” She later acknowledges (2002), p. 56, that non-rational animals can undergo thumos, but still insists that *N.E.* vii.6 considers distinctively human forms of the desire, and that this explains Aristotle’s connecting thumos to reason. I believe that the “as if” qualification shows that Aristotle is aware that thumos does not involve an actual process of reasoning (we have a related “as if” [*hoion*] in the “as if affirming or denying” of the perceptual soul in *De An.* 111.7, 431a8–10). Equally, *N.E.* 111.8, 1117a5–7 shows that thumos (*orgizomonoī* picking up repeated references to thumos) can be taken to aim at “revenge” (*timoria*) in non-rational animals as well as in humans. So we have little reason to think that the *N.E.* vii.6 passage seeks to specify a notion of thumos that only humans can undergo (although of course non-rational creatures cannot be akratic).

(c) *In what way does thumos obey reason "in a sense"?*

At the beginning of [C], Aristotle concludes: "therefore, thumos obeys reason in a sense, whereas epithumia does not." The "therefore," and the mention of both thumos and epithumia, suggest a direct connection to [B] and the reference there to the way in which thumos engages in quasi-reasoning in a way that epithumia does not. If so, thumos would be said to "obey" reason insofar as it involves a quasi-reasoning process in its formation (in response to *I*, thumos applies *QR* and draws *C'*). Connecting [C] with [B] in this way suggests that thumos obeys reason because reasoning seems implicit in its structure (unlike in epithumia). And thumos, on this reading, obeys reason only *in a sense* (*pôs*: 1149b1, b3), rather than unqualifiedly, because it does not employ genuine reasoning: the quasi-reasoning it manifests is simply implicit in this kind of evaluative response.

However, if we consider the notion that thumos obeys reason in light of our remarks in section 2(a) (concerning Aristotle's claim in [A] that thumos hears reason to some extent but mishears it), we will come up with a somewhat different reading of the concluding remarks in [C]. "Reason," in [A], meant "full reason," i.e., the complete instruction of the rational part. And, as we saw, thumos listens to but mishears this instruction because it takes on board only *part* of it. This suggests that thumos could be said to obey reason in that it involves taking on board an instruction from reason, and yet obey reason only *in a sense*, rather than unqualifiedly, because it actually takes on board only part of that instruction.

Now, given that the text appears to provide both readings, and yet Aristotle seems unaware that he is offering two different accounts, a charitable interpretation might attempt to take each to provide one aspect of a unified account. In fact, the two readings can be combined. The quasi-reasoning that premise [B] refers to ("slights/insults need to be fought against") alludes to the part of the full reason that [A] implies thumos picks out ("get revenge if you have been slighted [because slights ought to be resisted]!"). And the part of the full reason that [A] points to must only be tacit in the structure of thumos, not an actual piece of reasoning, since, as Aristotle emphasizes with [B]'s "reasoning in a sense," thumos cannot essentially incorporate a real piece of reasoning if it is to be a desire that we share with non-rational creatures.

My suggestion, then, is that when Aristotle claims in [C] that thumos "obeys reason in a sense," he means: thumos involves a quasi-reasoning

process that implicitly makes reference to part of the fully rational response.

(d) *How can the man who is akratic in respect of thumos be said to be “in a sense” conquered by reason?*

The thought in [D] seems to be:

- (i) the man who is akratic with respect to thumos gives in to his thumos and so can be said to be conquered by it;
- (ii) insofar as thumos itself involves obeying reason, the man who is akratic with respect to thumos can be said to be conquered by reason;
- (iii) thumos itself involves obeying reason only “in a sense”; so, (iv) the man who is akratic with respect to thumos is “in a sense” conquered by reason.

Now, we have seen that (iii) can be accounted for in different ways, depending on whether we take our cue from [A], [B], or combine [A] and [B] as I propose. However, note that on all three readings, Aristotle’s claim that the thumotic akratic is in a sense conquered by reason follows because of (i)–(iv).

If my reading of (iii) is correct, then the fullest account of Aristotle’s claim in [D] would be: the agent who is conquered by thumos is in a sense conquered by reason because (a) such a man gives in to his thumos (and so is conquered by it), and (b) this thumos itself involves obeying reason in a sense insofar as it involves a quasi-reasoning process that implicitly makes reference to part of a fully rational response.

3 *Why is thumotic akrasia less disgraceful than epithumotic akrasia?*

The basic argument is:

- (i) the thumotic akratic is in a sense conquered by reason;
- (ii) the epithumotic akratic is conquered by epithumia, not by reason; therefore, (iii) thumotic akrasia is less disgraceful than epithumotic akrasia (1149b2, referring back to 1149a24–25).

Evidently this relies on the suppressed premise that acting in a way that involves being in a sense conquered by reason is less disgraceful than failing to do even that. I have suggested that Aristotle thinks that the

thumotic akratic is conquered by reason in a sense because thumos itself obeys reason in a sense. The epithumotic akratic, by contrast, is conquered by epithumia, not by reason (in any sense), since epithumia does not involve obeying reason (in any sense).

Aristotle's thought seems to be that insofar as the thumotic akratic is conquered by reason in a sense, then even though he actually goes against the full instruction of reason, his action is *closer* to the fully rational one than an action which fails to incorporate any such partially/quasi-rational response, as with the epithumotic akratic.

It is instructive to compare Aristotle's view here with a parallel point he makes about weak and impetuous akratics. Aristotle claims (i) that weak akratics have deliberated and made a choice, whereas impetuous akratics have not, and (ii) that weak akratics are overcome by a less powerful emotion/desire than impetuous akratics (*N.E.* VII.7, 1150b19–22). And, significantly for us, he then maintains that these differences make the weak akratic worse than the impetuous akratic (*N.E.* VII.8, 1151a1–5).

But, given our understanding of the passage from *N.E.* VII.6, the relevance of the first of these considerations seems questionable. Insofar as the weak deliberate, they seem to be *more* influenced by reason than the impetuous, and yet Aristotle calls the former worse than the latter. But it was precisely the fact that thumotic akrasia involved being conquered by reason in a sense, whereas epithumotic akrasia did not, that made him call the latter worse than the former.

However, there is another way of looking at this. The weak akratic *fails* to respond to the reasoning present in his deliberation and so acts *against* his rational side. The fact that he has a fully formed rational motivation, and acts against it, makes him worse, on Aristotle's view, than an akratic who fails to form the rational motivation because of an intense passion. But this does not contradict the principle that the more an agent's act involves being conquered by reason, the better it is: the weak are not conquered by reason in any sense that the impetuous are not – the weak act *against* their rational motivation. And yet it is only the principle that the more an agent's act involves being conquered by reason, the better it is, that the *N.E.* VII.6 passage relies on. The thumotic akratic is conquered by reason in a way that the epithumotic akratic is not because thumos itself involves obeying reason in a sense. And this difference, Aristotle maintains, makes the act of the thumotic akratic less disgraceful than that of his epithumotic cousin.

PART II APPLICATION TO SOME ISSUES IN
ARISTOTLE'S MORAL PSYCHOLOGY

Let me now put the *N.E.* VII.6 passage in the wider context of various issues in Aristotle's moral psychology. I shall address four questions. (1) How does Aristotle's view that thumos obeys reason in a way that epithumia does not relate to his general claim in *N.E.* I.13 that an agent's non-rational side is capable of obeying his rational side (section 4)? (2) In what ways can various cognitive states be involved in the formation of non-rational desires (section 5)? (3) What makes a desire count as "non-rational" for Aristotle (section 6)? (4) How do non-rational desires function in virtue (section 7)?

4 *The ways in which non-rational desires can obey reason*

In *N.E.* I.13 Aristotle claims that there is a non-rational part of the soul that shares in reason "in a way" (*pê*: 1102b14). He notes that although we praise the reason of enkratic and akratic agents and the part of their soul possessing reason (since it "urges them aright and towards the best objects"), there is found in them (i.e., in their souls: 1102b20–21) another element, which fights against reason (hence they have conflicting impulses [*hormai*: 1102b21]). Aristotle adds:

Now even this [non-rational part] seems to have a share in reason, as we said; at any rate in the enkratic man it obeys reason – and presumably in the temperate and courageous man it is still more ready to listen; for in him it speaks, on all matters, with the same voice as reason. (1102b25–28)

The evidence that the non-rational part has *a share in* reason is that in the enkratic man it obeys reason, whereas in the virtuous agent it is still more ready to listen because it actually directs him in the very same direction as his rational side. But why has Aristotle left out mention of the akratic agent here? He seems to be assuming that the non-rational side of the enkratic agent can be said to obey reason only because he ends up following his rational side, whereas since the akratic agent follows his non-rational side against his rational side, his non-rational part cannot count as obeying reason.

If this is Aristotle's view, it invites a further question: does the non-rational part of the akratic agent fail to "share in" reason as well? Two options seem available. Aristotle could maintain that the mere fact the non-rational side *can* obey or chime with reason means that this part

counts as sharing in reason in general (even when, as with the akratic, it disobeys it).²¹ Or he could hold that since the akratic agent's non-rational side does not obey or listen to reason, his non-rational part does not count as sharing in reason either. Aristotle's next lines support the latter of these options. He claims that the non-rational part (here characterized as the epithumotic and in general desiring part [*kai holôs orektikon*])²² shares in reason "in a sense" (*pôs*), "insofar as (*hê*) it listens to it and obeys it" (1102b30–31). The "listening to and obeying" here seems to refer back to the enkratic obeying and virtuous listening we had in the earlier passage (1102b25–28, quoted above). But the fact that Aristotle claims that the sharing relation holds *insofar as* listening or obeying occurs suggests that if the akratic agent's non-rational side does not count as obeying or listening to reason then it does not count as sharing in it either.²³ And given it does seem that the akratic agent's non-rational side does not count as obeying or listening to reason, we seem able to conclude that a minimal condition for the non-rational part to "share in" reason is:

(C₁) The non-rational part does not prevent the rational part from dictating what the agent does, and so can be said to "obey" the rational part.

This is why the akratic agent's non-rational side would not count as sharing in reason, and why even though the enkratic agent's non-rational side urges him to act *against* reason, it does count as such, since it does not in the end hold sway.

In addition, there is a second condition which amounts to the non-rational part sharing in reason in the fullest sense:

(C₂) The non-rational part "speaks on all matters with the same voice as" ("is still more ready to listen to," "harmonizes/chimes with") reason; i.e., urges the agent to act the very same way as reason itself does.

The enkratic agent's non-rational side satisfies C₁, but falls short of C₂; the virtuous agent's non-rational side must satisfy both C₁ and C₂ (I consider this further in section 7 below).²⁴

²¹ Grönroos (2007), p. 259 and p. 259n.23, claims that this is Aristotle's view.

²² This is perhaps slightly misleading since (as alluded to in the introduction) one kind of orexis is *boulêsis*, a rational desire.

²³ The structure of the passage, then, on my reading, is: 1102b13–14 refers to (i) the second non-rational part (besides the nutritive), and claims (ii) that this part shares in reason "in a sense"; we then get evidence for the existence of (i) (1102b16–25), before an explanation of the sense in which (and when) (ii) holds (1102b25–1103a1).

²⁴ More needs to be said about the way(s) in which the non-rational part can actually be "persuaded" by reason (1102b31–1103a1), not just obey (i.e., not ultimately prevent) or harmonize with (i.e., point in the same direction as) it. There is some discussion in, e.g., Broadie (1991), pp. 61–72; Cooper (1999d), pp. 244–47; and Grönroos (2007).

How, then, does this account relate to Aristotle's claims in *N.E.* VII.6? At first sight, the latter may seem to contradict the former since *N.E.* VII.6 holds that the non-rational side of one kind of akratic (the thumotic) *does* obey reason, whereas *N.E.* I.13 suggests that the non-rational side of the akratic agent fails to count as obeying reason. The *N.E.* VII.6 passage even echoes *N.E.* I.13 insofar as it claims, as we have seen, that the thumos of the akratic agent obeys reason only "in a sense". But in *N.E.* I.13 obedience is reserved for the non-rational side of enkratic and virtuous agents.

However, there is a satisfactory resolution to this. I argued that in *N.E.* VII.6 a non-rational desire counts as obeying reason if it involves a quasi-reasoning process that implicitly makes reference to part of a fully rational response. But whether or not a non-rational part obeys reason in this sense (or, indeed, in either of the other senses of "obey" mentioned in section 2[c]) is irrelevant for whether or not it obeys reason in accordance with C₁, or harmonizes with reason in accordance with C₂. After all, thumos obeys reason in the sense specified by *N.E.* VII.6, but the thumos of the akratic agent does not satisfy either C₁ or C₂ (whereas the thumos of the enkratic agent satisfies C₁, and the thumos of the virtuous agent satisfies both C₁ and C₂).

Here is an additional point. Aristotle claims that he employs the unqualified term "akrasia" to refer to akrasia with respect to certain kinds of bodily epithumiai (e.g., *N.E.* VII.4, 1148a4–11). Hence, since the term akrasia is not qualified in *N.E.* I.13, we could reasonably assume that it is unqualified akrasia he has in mind. But *N.E.* VII.6 does not retract the claim that unqualified akrasia (i.e., epithumotic akrasia) involves the non-rational side failing to obey reason. All *N.E.* VII.6 adds is that there is a special sense of "obey" in which the non-rational side of the thumotic akratic can be said to obey reason; namely, that the thumos that conquers such an agent and leads him to act akratically can itself be said to obey reason in the sense we specified. (And so, effectively, in thumotic akrasia, the rational side proper is overcome by a quasi-rational side [represented by the thumos], rather than a purely non-rational side.)

If the way that thumos itself obeys reason counts as a way in which a non-rational desire can "share in" reason, then we end up with no less than three different ways in which a non-rational desire can share in reason. It might satisfy C₁, or satisfy both C₁ and C₂, or, finally, it might itself be some kind of quasi-rational response. Since this last way is distinct from the others, we could have a desire that doubly obeyed reason, so to speak, i.e., if it involved some kind of quasi-rational response and

also satisfied C1. And we could also have a desire that shared in reason in each sense; i.e., incorporated some kind of quasi-rational response and also satisfied both C1 and C2. This would be a thumos that motivated one to act in the way in which one's rational side was itself prompting.

5 *The ways in which various cognitive states can be involved
in the formation of non-rational desires*

[B] suggests that a number of different cognitive states (perception/phantasia/reason) can provide information leading to the formation of a non-rational desire. Besides reason (which I shall consider shortly), Aristotle specifies (i) that phantasia can provide information leading to a thumos, and (ii) that perception can provide information leading to an epithumia. Were these specifications merely illustrative? Could Aristotle simply have exchanged phantasia and perception in (i) and (ii)?

With thumos, phantasia was said to register the information *that we have been slighted or insulted*. This could refer to a cognition that lies beyond what we currently perceptually encounter. We might, for example, find ourselves replaying some earlier event or situation in our minds, and then suddenly construe ourselves as having been slighted or insulted at that point. This would count as a perceptual-phantasia, for Aristotle, not an occurrent perceptual encounter, since it does not involve some presently encountered object (cf. *De Mem.* 1, 449b13–15, 449b25–27). But even though phantasia seems able, in some such way, to provide information outside our occurrent perceptions, it nonetheless at least seems true that perception *is able* to provide information that will lead to a thumos. We might, for example, see someone stick two fingers up at us, and this arouse a thumos in us.

Equally, there seems to be no reason to think that phantasia could not replace perception in (ii). A random daydream about lying on a beach, for example, might arouse an epithumia (to continue) to imagine lying on a beach (to pick an example that fits the structure of the one we specified in section 1). In addition, phantasia might be involved in entertaining the *prospect* of some pleasure. One might, for example, on a hot day, imagine licking an ice-cream and this arouse an epithumia to eat one.

Now consider the significance of the fact that in both cases Aristotle allows that *reason* can supply the relevant information. Elsewhere he asserts, apparently without qualification, that epithumia and thumos are non-rational desires (see n.2 for references), and yet he here claims, without hesitation or comment, that reason can lead to their formation.

The most straightforward explanation of this, I suspect, is as follows. *N.E.* VII.6 distinguishes the informational input leading to a desire, the light in virtue of which it is formed, from the desire proper itself (see section 2[b]). Hence, if Aristotle treats the rational/non-rational status of a desire as a feature of the desire proper itself, it will result that a desire's rational/non-rational status would be unaffected by the rational status of the cognitive faculty supplying the information leading to its formation. If so, although some particular thumos or epithumia might be formed in response to certain information that could be provided *only* by reason, e.g., a subtle insult written in a letter, this would not result in a thumos or epithumia that counts as a rational desire. The desire would still be classified as non-rational; it would just be a non-rational desire that could only be formed by rational creatures.

6 *What makes a desire "non-rational" for Aristotle?*

If this is right, it invites the question: what makes a desire non-rational for Aristotle? I cannot here address this in full,²⁵ but let me offer some thoughts flowing from consideration of my *N.E.* VII.6 passage.

If, as suggested above, the non-rational status of a desire is not to be accounted for by the status of the cognitive faculty providing the information leading to the desire, then it is also unlikely that it is to be accounted for by the status of the cognitive capacity involved in grasping the specific object or content of the desire itself. This is because the cognitive capacity involved in grasping such content will often naturally correspond to the cognitive capacity that provided the information that led to its formation. And so if, as we have allowed, reason might be required to provide the information leading to an epithumia or thumos, then it would be natural to think that grasping the specific object or content of the desire might in turn require reason. A letter with a subtle slight might lead to a thumos for an equally subtle revenge-letter. Reason might suggest that smoking an expensive Cuban cigar would be pleasurable and lead to an epithumia to do so. Both of these specific desire-contents (to-write-a-subtle-revenge-letter; to-smoke-an-expensive-Cuban-cigar) seem beyond the capacity of non-rational animals, and yet could be natural responses to information supplied by reason.²⁶ But if the non-rational status of a desire is to be

²⁵ I discuss the question at greater length in Pearson (2011), Chapter 7.

²⁶ I leave to one side the question of the scope of the objects of desire. It is possible (but in fact I think incorrect) that Aristotle thinks that epithumiai are restricted to desires for bodily pleasures. But my examples would still work since they are not purely intellectual pleasures, but pleasures that, although bodily, seem to require reason. So too, below, I refer to "pleasure" as

accounted for neither by the status of the capacity providing the information leading to it, nor by the status of the capacity required to grasp its specific object, then what does account for it? Let me simply offer two possibilities, without developing them in any systematic way.

(1) I suggested in section 2(b) that we should understand Aristotle's claim (in [B]) that it is "as if" thumos reasons/syllogizes not as meaning that thumos incorporates an actual process of reasoning, but only that it seems to do so because of the structure of the desire and the evaluative response it represents. But then perhaps the distinction between rational and non-rational desires can be drawn precisely on the ground of whether or not an explicit process of reasoning is involved in the very structure of the desire (the desiderative mechanism that processes the information and issues in the desire's content)? If this were the right way to proceed, then although a thumos might be formed in response to reason (as with a slight in a letter) and itself be for an object that requires one to have rational capacities (as with a revenge-letter), it would still count as a non-rational desire since its internal structure (what the thumos itself *does* with the information it computes) does not itself involve an explicit process of reasoning (it is only "as if" it does). Only when a desire involves such a process (perhaps, e.g., by explicitly incorporating chains of thoughts that constitute what I called the "full reason" in section 2[a]) would it count as rational. Thumos, on the other hand, with only a quasi-rational process, and epithumia, without even that, would count as non-rational.

(2) One might instead suggest that so long as the general evaluative concern of a desire is one we share with non-rational creatures, then it can count as non-rational, even if specific tokens of that desire can require abilities beyond the capacity of non-rational creatures. In [B] Aristotle claims the pleasantness of an object arouses the agent's epithumia. Pleasure is clearly an evaluative concern we share with non-rational creatures. But even if an epithumia to smoke an expensive Cuban cigar (*qua* such) requires rational abilities, such a desire (let us suppose) is ultimately grounded in the general evaluative concern of pleasure; and appreciating and being moved by *that general concern* does not require rational capacities, even if rational creatures can be moved by such a general evaluative concern to pursue things (such as that mentioned) that do. For this strategy to be plausible, it will of course have to be the case that thumos also incorporates a general evaluative concern shared by non-rational creatures. But although some commentators suggest otherwise, I think

the evaluative concern of epithumia, leaving it open if this general object of the desire should be restricted to bodily pleasure.

thumos can reasonably be thought of as operating with a general resistive or retaliative concern we share with non-rational creatures (see, e.g., *N.E.* III.1, III.1a21–22, III.2, III.1b12–13, III.8, III.6b23–III.7a9, esp. III.7a5–7).²⁷

Space inevitably prevents me from considering these strategies in more detail. However, both seem consonant with the *N.E.* VII.6 passage, and either, or indeed both combined, will preserve the thought that even though the desiderative mechanisms of epithumia and thumos are capable of processing information that only rational creatures can grasp, and issuing in specific desire-contents that only rational creatures can be attracted by, there is still a genuine sense in which each counts as non-rational.

7 *Non-rational desire and virtue*

In section 4 we noted that the virtuous agent's non-rational side must satisfy both C1 and C2: it must not only give way to his rational side, but actually motivate him to the same course of action as his rational side. This appears to make Aristotle's account of virtue quite demanding; precisely how demanding I shall now investigate.

The passage I quoted from *N.E.* I.13 (1102b25–28) does seem to require that Aristotle's account of virtue is more demanding than is often thought. A number of commentators have maintained that Aristotle's account permits (or even demands, for certain virtues) that virtuous agents possess conflicting desires. This can be seen clearly, they claim, in the sphere of courage. Aristotle thinks that even the courageous agent will experience fear (see esp. *N.E.* III.7, 1115b7–20), and, these commentators argue, if he experiences fear, he must experience a desire to flee the feared thing as well.²⁸ However, as I see it, Aristotle can draw a distinction between a distressful emotional state and

²⁷ At least going back to Burnyeat (1980), p. 84, a number of commentators have claimed that thumos in Aristotle has some special relation to nobility/justice/dignity (see also Broadie [1991], p. 269, and [2002], p. 56). This culminates in Cooper (1999e) suggesting that we should line up each of Aristotle's three desires with one of the "three objects of choice" (the good, the pleasant, the noble) mentioned in *N.E.* I.3, 1104b30–31, and assign thumos to "the noble" (*to kalon*) (Grönroos [2007] uncritically follows Cooper). But I do not see any direct evidence that thumos ever takes such an eminent end as its immediate object (Aristotle almost always has his account of anger in mind, a desire for revenge owing to a perceived slight/insult, when he considers thumos), and it would be an astonishing silence if he failed to mention such an important feature of his account (cf. Cooper [1999e], pp. 279–80). On my view, the general end of thumos must be shareable with non-rational creatures (just as the general end of epithumia, pleasure, is shareable with non-rational creatures), even though in rational creatures this end may take increasingly complex specific forms. (Of course, thumos can be directed at a noble end in the sense that it can be noble to resist what thumos directs us to resist. But epithumia can be directed at a noble end in a parallel sense; see *N.E.* III.12, 1119b15–18, quoted in n.16 above.) For more on the object of thumos, see Pearson (2011), Chapter 5.

²⁸ See, e.g., Pears (1978), p. 279, and (1980), p. 174; Charles (1984a), p. 170 n.6; Leighton (1988), p. 92; and Heil (1996), p. 61.

any desires that stem from that state, and then maintain that a courageous agent facing death should experience the former (because this is an appropriate evaluative response to his knowingly losing his valuable life: *N.E.* III.7, III.5b7–15 with III.9, III.7b10–13), but be so habituated that the emotion does not generate a desire to flee.²⁹ Without going into details, it is sufficient to note that *N.E.* I.13 asserts that the non-rational desires (II02b30) of the temperate and courageous agent speak “on all matters” (*panta*) with the same voice as reason (II02b27–28). Aristotle explicitly applies C2 to courage, and C2 demands that virtuous agents do not have conflicting desires.

However, the demandingness of this account of virtue need not, I think, be considered objectionable, since Aristotle accepts that it is extremely difficult to be virtuous (see esp. *N.E.* II.9), and may be more interested in setting up an ideal (cf. *N.E.* x.7, II77b26ff.) than providing a criterion for chastising anyone who falls slightly short. But there is still an issue of precisely how demanding Aristotle's account is.

N.E. VII.6 might seem to bear on this. Aristotle's characterizations of *epithumia* and *thumos* in [B] naturally invite the idea that when confronted with the relevant information, the arousal of the respective desires is inevitable. As we have seen, Aristotle claims that when reason/*phantasia* informs us that we have been insulted/slighted, *thumos*, reasoning as it were that anything like this must be fought against, boils up straightway; or, if reason/perception merely says an object is pleasant, *epithumia* springs to the enjoyment of it. Although (as we have emphasized) desires, on Aristotle's view, are distinct from the information leading to them, these characterizations seem to suggest that once the relevant information is cognized, the desiderative responses will follow as a matter of course. Before we consider whether this reading really is required, it will be instructive to examine the consequences of adopting it, when coupled with the point that the non-rational side of virtuous agents must satisfy C2 (not simply C1). C2 demands that the agent's non-rational part prompt him to precisely the same course of action as his rational side. But if this is put together with the idea that, for example, an *epithumia* will invariably be aroused when the agent cognizes that something is pleasant, we arrive at the view that the virtuous agent must *cognize* the very same situation differently from akratic and enkratic agents. For, if an *epithumia* is inevitable upon cognizing that something is pleasant, and (in addition) the presence of a contrary desire means that C2 fails to hold, then the only way that the virtuous agent could satisfy C2 would be if he failed to

²⁹ See Brady (2005) for a similar account that attempts to explain how the courageous agent may be habituated into such a state.

cognize that the object is pleasant in the way that the akratic or enkratic agent does. Consider the example (from section 1) of Smith akratically allowing himself to be seduced by his boss, and contrast this version of Smith with enkratic and virtuous versions of him. Enkratic-Smith, in the same situation, would be very similar to akratic-Smith, but with the obvious difference that although he would find the kiss pleasant, and form a desire for more of the same, he would nonetheless manage to resist this desire. Now, some might think that such behavior ought to be enough for virtue, but we have seen that Aristotle would not, since he thinks that the virtuous agent's non-rational desires must motivate in the same direction as his rational side. However, on the interpretation currently under consideration, Aristotle would not only hold that the virtuous agent should not form a conflicting non-rational desire, he would also maintain that since Smith's forming such a desire is an inevitable reaction to the pleasurable sensation of having Scarlet put her hand on his thigh and kiss his lips, virtuous-Smith *cannot actually find those things pleasurable*. If he did, a desire would inevitably form, and he would be conflicted in a way that contravenes C2.³⁰ On this view, Smith can recognize that Scarlet is attractive, but the fact that he believes that cheating on his wife is wrong entails that he simply cannot find Scarlet's kiss enjoyable.

Now one might be inclined to object that this would elevate Aristotle's account from demanding to absurdly demanding. However, again, if Aristotle is in the business of considering ideals, the fact that the account is extremely demanding is not necessarily an objection. If we examine the ideal reaction of an agent in the scenario in question, would it be obviously wrong to hold that his conception of the situation should dictate what he would find pleasurable? Since Smith thinks that he should not be kissing Scarlet, a fully virtuous version of him, Aristotle could maintain, would not find such an activity pleasurable. To support this, Aristotle might point to cases in which we shall more readily agree to this point. Suppose that Smith had been tucking into nibbles that Scarlet had left lying around the lounge. Then imagine, mid-nibble, Scarlet announces that Smith is, and was, eating pieces of dried human flesh. Might we not think that Smith's revised conception of the situation should affect the pleasure he takes in eating these nibbles, even (or perhaps especially) the one he was until that point pleasurable munching on? If this is conceded, Aristotle could suggest that the previous case is relevantly similar.

³⁰ Nor, in the variation of the case with a promised pleasure (instead of one actually encountered) could virtuous-Smith cognize that it *would* be pleasant to kiss Scarlet; since, on the hypothesis under consideration, this would inevitably lead to a desire to kiss her, and such a desire, even if resisted, would contravene C2.

However, it would be a mistake to hold that the virtuous agent's conception of his situation *must* dictate what he finds pleasurable in this way, and so a mistake to think that such a view could serve as part of a defense of the idea that certain pleasures or evaluative cognitions will inevitably lead to certain desires.³¹ Consider the following case. Suppose that if the drug heroin is administered by a doctor in the correct manner and dosage, it will invariably bring about a pleasurable euphoria. Now imagine Jones goes to see his doctor for a tetanus jab, but that somehow such a correct dose of heroin (or its medical equivalent, methadone) gets mixed up with the tetanus shot, and is injected by mistake. A pleasurable euphoria ensues, but Jones, like most of us, did not, does not, and never will, desire to take heroin. Since the drug (under the conditions specified) will invariably bring about a pleasurable euphoria, it will do so whether or not Jones is virtuous. Hence there does not seem to be space in this case for an agent who, when injected with the drug, will not find the effects pleasurable. And thus there does not seem to be space for an ideally virtuous agent who, when informed (shortly after the injection) that he has been mistakenly injected with heroin, will not find the effects pleasurable. So even if in some cases it seems that our judgments should effect what we would find pleasurable (as with human-flesh nibbles), this could not be demanded for all cases. (There seems to be a range of cases: from the drug case at one end, to the eating of human flesh at the other, with Scarlet's kissing Smith somewhere in-between.)

If this is right, we shall want to examine whether *N.E.* VII.6 really demands that desires would inevitably form upon encountering the relevant information. Strictly speaking, all Aristotle needs is that *when* a thumos or an epithumia is aroused in response to the relevant information, there is a quasi-reasoning process going on in the former that is not present in the latter. This would enable him to maintain that thumos obeys reason in a way that epithumia does not, and hence that thumotic *akrasia* is less disgraceful than epithumotic *akrasia*. But clearly this does not require that the respective cognitions will in every case bring about the corresponding desiderative responses. And perhaps [B] need not demand this reading. When Aristotle claims that if reason/*phantasia* informs us we

³¹ Clearly one could hold that an agent's conception of his situation should dictate what he finds pleasurable independently of holding that certain pleasures or evaluative cognitions inevitably bring about certain desires; e.g., one could hold that although every pleasure is dependent on one's conception of the situation, no desire is ever entailed by a specific pleasure. But appealing to the notion that an agent's conception of his situation should dictate what he finds pleasurable is at least one way of ameliorating the tension between C2, as a requirement for virtue, and the idea that certain evaluative cognitions inevitably lead to certain desires.

have been insulted/slighted, thumos boils up, whereas if reason/perception merely says that an object is pleasant, epithumia springs to the enjoyment of it, perhaps he was considering agents who were already disposed to form these desires in the light of such information? After all, Aristotle is examining cases of akrasia, and so might be assuming agents with akratic dispositions, dispositions that make it so that such information will inevitably bring about the desires *in them*. This would open up the possibility that he could allow, e.g., that upon receiving the information that something is pleasant, the formation of an epithumia is *contingent*.³²

I cannot now develop this further, but to close let me briefly consider David Charles's intriguing interpretation of Aristotle's account of non-rational desire, since this overlaps with some of my concerns here. Charles³³ claims that Aristotle thinks

perceiving A as pleasant, being pleurably affected by A, and [sensually] desiring A are not distinct types of activity, instances of one occurring after instances of the other. Rather, there is just one type of activity which can be described in three different ways.³⁴

On this account, if Smith finds Scarlet's kiss pleasurable, then he perceives this as pleasant and desires it. It is important to note that the desire referred to here is simply the desire involved in finding the kiss pleasurable, *not* a desire for it to continue, or develop further. Those would be different desires and presumably different (anticipatory) pleasures. But, even so, why should we think sensory pleasures simply are desires? The claim seems to be that one cannot define what it is for a subject to see something as pleasant without reference to the fact that the subject is attracted towards that object, and this entails that he desires it.³⁵ If Smith

³² It might be possible to support this view by appealing to a passage in *N.E.* VII.3, 1147a33–b3. The akratic agent there seems to possess the information that something is pleasant (he thinks: everything sweet is pleasant and that this is sweet), and yet Aristotle does *not* claim: "and because we discern that something is pleasant, epithumia is present in us"; but: "and when [i.e., it seems, *in addition*] epithumia is present in us, *then* epithumia leads us towards the thing." This suggests that upon receiving the information that something is pleasant, the formation of an epithumia is contingent. However, given the controversy surrounding this passage (see, e.g., Bostock [2000], pp. 127–32, and Price [2006], pp. 240–41, for some discussion), it would be hard to rely on it alone.

³³ See his (2006) and cf. his (2007), §7.

³⁴ Charles (2006), p. 21. There are a number of ways one might resist this. I shall just focus on the one relevant to my considerations here: that taking pleasure in something is the same as desiring it. I should note that Charles gets his reading not from *N.E.* VII.6, but from another key passage, namely, *De An.* III.7, 431a8–17. I hope to provide an alternative reading of this passage on another occasion.

³⁵ Charles (2006), p. 29.

finds Scarlet's touch pleasurable, he must be attracted to it in some way; and if he is attracted to it, doesn't he desire it?

I believe we should resist this on the ground that it trades on an ambiguity of the expression "be attracted to." Does Jones desire *the effects of heroin as caused by heroin*? No – because he does not desire to take heroin. Would Jones find *the effects of heroin as caused by heroin* pleasurable? Yes – or let us suppose he would if the drug were administered safely, in an appropriate quantity, by a qualified doctor, etc. Is Jones *attracted to* the effects of heroin as caused by heroin? The answer in this case seems to depend on what we mean by "attracted to." If the question amounts to: "Does Jones *desire* the effects of heroin as caused by heroin?", then the answer is "no." If instead we mean: "Would Jones find the effects of heroin as caused by heroin attractive?", then the answer may well be "yes," but only if "find attractive" means something like "find pleasurable." If this is right, experiencing A as pleasant does not require being attracted to A in the same sense in which being attracted to A amounts to desiring A. Therefore sensually desiring A is not the same as being pleurably affected by A.

I also think our *N.E.* vii.6 passage is naturally read as implying a distinction between the cognition that something is pleasant and a desire for it. Aristotle states that if reason or perception merely says an object is pleasant, *epithumia* springs to the enjoyment of it. On Charles's reading, if perception says an object is pleasant, then *that very perception* is an *epithumia* for the thing; but Aristotle's claim implies that they are distinct.

CHAPTER 7

Aristotle, agents, and actions

Iakovos Vasiliou

HABITUATION, ACTIONS, AND CHARACTER

At the heart of Aristotle's account of ethical upbringing is habituation. At least all of the virtues of character – justice, generosity, temperance, courage, and so on – just are habituated states brought about by the repeated doing of actions of a certain ethical type. We are not born courageous or cowardly (although we may have natural dispositions in one direction or the other); rather, we are *made* courageous or cowardly insofar as we have engaged in courageous or cowardly actions in our lives. Engaging in actions of a certain type gives rise to the corresponding habituated state of character. In short, “we become just by doing just things, temperate by doing temperate things, and courageous by doing courageous things” (*N.E.* 11.1, 1103a34–b2). Let us call this idea “the habituation principle” (HP). As the explicit analogy with craft (*technê*) in *N.E.* 11.1 shows, the habituation principle is itself value neutral: one becomes a good harpist or a good builder if one acquires good building or harp-playing habits, but a bad one if not; similarly one becomes a virtuous person if she engages in virtuous acts, but a bad or vicious person if one doesn't.

I have two points to make about this familiar Aristotelian principle. First, Aristotle does not take the habituation principle to be his own idea; he gets it from Plato. In 11.1–3, while he expands on the habituation principle, he twice mentions the importance of acquiring good habits right from youth (1103b22–25, 1104b11–13). In the second passage Aristotle adds “as Plato says.” Commentators cite *Republic* 401e–402a, where, indeed, Plato says just this.¹ But we shouldn't think that Aristotle refers to just this one passage. Rather, from the end of Book 11 until the end of Book 14 in the *Republic*, Plato is concerned with articulating the

¹ Irwin (1999); Broadie and Rowe (2002).

outlines of an educational program that takes the habituation principle as its basic truth: engaging in actions of type F makes you a person of type F. Therefore, one (or one's guardian) had better make sure that one is engaging in the right sort of actions right from childhood. This is of course part of the response to Glaucon's and Adeimantus' "why be moral?" challenge at the beginning of Book II. *Part* of the answer is that it would be wrong to think that a person could, for example, steal, without that unjust action, as it were, touching her – as though the stealing simply concerned the acquired material good and the person from whom it had been taken, but had nothing to do with the agent's soul or character. The habituation principle rejects this: one is what one does. Every action is at the same time a part of forming one's character; it effects and affects the state of one's soul.²

This brings me to my second, perhaps more controversial point. HP most plausibly goes with the following view:

The Metaphysical Priority of Action (MP-act): virtuous agents are virtuous because they perform virtuous actions.

Further, HP most plausibly rejects the following view:

The Metaphysical Priority of the Agent (MP-agent): virtuous actions are virtuous because they are performed by virtuous agents.

I refer to these claims as "metaphysical" because they concern what the essence or nature of virtuous actions is. In other words, they are claims about what *makes* virtuous actions virtuous. Is an action being virtuous a matter of something about the action itself, independent of the agent? Or is an action virtuous because an action is performed by a certain sort of agent (or an agent in a certain sort of state)? If we think of the definition of a thing in Platonic and Aristotelian fashion as stating the essence of the thing – what makes it the thing that it is – then MP settles the issue of definitional priority. The question at issue is whether the essence of a virtuous action is derived from the essence of the virtuous agent, or vice versa. This is sometimes discussed as a question about *priority*: are virtuous actions *prior to* virtuous agents, or vice versa? That is the intended force of the "because" above: what it is to be a virtuous agent is to do an action that *already and independently is* virtuous in itself (MP-act); or, what it is to be a virtuous action is for it to have been

² Of course, a committed skeptic could say, "I don't care about my soul or what kind of person I am," but, if Plato's argument is correct, the skeptic has been pushed.

done by agent who *already and independently is* virtuous (MP-agent). I discuss these positions as two possible views about “metaphysical priority” (MP).

Since HP is an account of how a person *becomes*, for example, virtuous, and since HP says that a person becomes the type of person he/she is by doing actions that *are already* of a corresponding sort, it is not also plausible to think that actions *become* the type of actions they are because they are performed by a certain type of agent. Rather, certain actions in one’s life – e.g., refraining from a third doughnut in some circumstances, C – just is what the temperate action in C is. By performing that action one starts to habituate oneself to become temperate. This seems the most natural understanding of what Aristotle says about HP in the *N.E.*:

It is the same, then, with the virtues [as with the crafts]. For what we do in our dealings with other people makes some of us just, some unjust; what we do in terrifying situations, and the habits of fear or confidence that we acquire, make some of us brave and others cowardly. The same is true of situations involving appetites and anger; for one or another sort of conduct in these situations makes some temperate and mild, others intemperate and irascible. To sum it up in a single account: a state [of character] results from [the repetition of] similar activities. (1103b13–22; trans. Irwin [1999])

The straightforward understanding of the lesson of such a passage is, for example, that there is an action in our dealing with some person that would be unjust (say, not repaying a debt) and an action that would be just (say, paying the debt), and by doing one or the other we make ourselves just or unjust. Thus Aristotle, with his endorsement of HP, would seem to hold that actions are metaphysically prior to agents.³

Some readers might be inclined to detect a serious misstep here. On the account I have described so far, there are at least some token actions in the world that are, in themselves, just or unjust, temperate or intemperate, virtuous or vicious.⁴ By definition, virtuous people do virtuous

³ In addition there has been no talk thus far about an agent’s “motivation”; the first three lines of 11.2 state that the overall purpose of the inquiry is to *become* good, not simply to *know* the good. Aristotle provides an account of how one becomes good: namely via properly conducted habituation. Part of becoming good will turn out to involve becoming an agent who is motivated in particular ways. *Why* someone should be interested in becoming good is not addressed here. Rather, the argument says: we want to become good/just/virtuous and we become good/just/virtuous by engaging in actions of the corresponding type. The difference between the “motivation” of the virtuous agent and the “motivation” for *being* (or *becoming*) a virtuous agent will be important below and will be articulated by discriminating between “motive” and “end.”

⁴ “Vicious” understood as the antonym of “virtuous.”

actions. If one accepts MP-act and the habituation principle, as I have argued Aristotle seems to in *N.E.* II.1–3, then actions are prior to and independent of agents – and indeed, this is why HP works: because there are really just and temperate actions to engage in, which can have the effect of making one just and temperate. The concept of character is secondary on this reading; acquiring virtue is a matter of habituating someone to perform actions that are *already* the right or virtuous ones. But this, one may object, is the wrong way to think of Aristotle in particular, for he holds a virtue- or agent-based ethical theory. The whole point of virtue ethics is that *character* is primary and *action* secondary.⁵ And Aristotle is the hero of virtue ethics.

But should he be? A couple of scholars have suggested the answer is “no.”⁶ My discussion here aims to be a contribution towards addressing this larger question. But for now, let’s turn to II.4, where Aristotle complicates the picture he has developed in the first three chapters. In II.4 Aristotle seems to say that the *state of the agent* is an essential part of an action’s being virtuous. We cannot, if this is correct, identify an action as virtuous or not without knowing the state of the agent. If Aristotle’s claims here go so far as to say that it is the state of the agent that *makes* an action virtuous or not, then it would seem that he endorses MP-agent in II.4, and there would be a significant tension in his account.

THE PRIMACY OF CHARACTER

N.E. II.4 opens with a puzzle for his account of habituation that I hope may be clearer given the preceding discussion. If repetition of similar actions gives rise to a corresponding state of character, but the state of character in question is necessary in order to perform actions of the relevant type in the first place, then it is unclear how habituation can occur. Aristotle’s response, of course, is that a state of character is not necessary in order to perform actions of the proper type – neither in the case of craft nor in the case of virtue. Key to his entire account of upbringing is that one can do what the virtuous person would do (or what the craftsperson would do)

⁵ In the *Republic* Plato has an obvious, if somewhat extravagant, way of expressing the independent nature of just (virtuous) action: an action is just if and only if it participates in the Form of Justice. Nevertheless most people believe that Plato makes character primary and action secondary in the *Republic*. For an alternative, see Vasiliou (2008), Chapters 6–8.

⁶ Broadie (2007), pp. 120–21, 126, discusses the issue briefly, as does Morison (2007), 243–5; Santas (1997) is devoted to it.

without one's being virtuous or an expert – one can either get lucky (for example, accidentally acquire the habit of spelling a word correctly) or one can follow the instructions of someone else. It is true that an excellent shoe made by, say, one person's following the directions of someone else would not count as the exercising of a craft, since it was not made in the way that a true craftsman would make it – namely from the skill that the craftsman himself possesses. Analogously, it is also true that doing what the virtuous person would do (paying a debt in some circumstance) because someone tells you to, would not count as doing the virtuous action *as* the virtuous person would do it. So there is still an analogy on Aristotle's account between the virtuous *person* and the crafts*person* – each needs to be in a certain condition (different for each) – in order for the “doing” to be a genuine exercise of craft or a genuine exercise of virtue.

Beginning at 1105a26, however, Aristotle explicitly claims to be drawing a *disanalogy* between craft (*technê*) and virtue. For crafts, whether the output of the craft is excellent or not depends entirely on the condition of the output (1105a27–28). A shoe may be (entirely) excellent without considering anything at all about the agent who made the shoe. For virtue, by contrast, the right thing having been done (the debt paid) is merely necessary but not sufficient for counting *what was done* as a virtuous action. So, one *cannot* say that a token action is excellent (virtuous) simply by looking at what was done, whereas one *can* say whether a shoe is excellent or not simply by looking at what was done/produced (i.e., the shoe). For an action to be genuinely virtuous the agent must meet the following three “agent-conditions”: (1) he must be “knowing”; (2) he must decide on the action and decide on it for its own sake; and (3) he must act from both a firm and unchanging state of character.⁷

Regardless of how we finally understand the analogy or disanalogy between craft and virtue, one point is clear from 11.4: for a person to be “fully” virtuous, she must be in a certain condition and not simply do actions of certain “sorts.” It is less clear whether, on Aristotle's account, actions may be called virtuous or not, independently of any reference to the agent. Certainly Aristotle himself *calls* actions virtuous, just, courageous, and so on, without making any reference to the state of the agent, and, furthermore, unless he is to contradict his account of habituation, one must be able to “do what the virtuous person would do” without *already* being in the state that is brought about by habituation. Consider the text that follows the list of the three agent-conditions:

⁷ One might be puzzled, however, about whether there really is a disanalogy between virtue and craft as Aristotle claims. After all, there is a “two-level” evaluation at work in each case: there is the

As a condition for having a virtue, however, the knowing counts for nothing, or [rather] only a little, whereas the other two conditions are very important, indeed all-important. And we achieve these other conditions by [HP] the frequent doing of just and temperate actions. *Hence actions are called just or temperate when they are the sort that a just or temperate person would do. But the just and temperate person is not the one who [merely] does these actions, but the one who also does them in the way in which just or temperate people do them.* It is right, then, to say that [HP] a person comes to be just from doing just actions and temperate from doing temperate actions; for no one has the least prospect of becoming good from failing to do them. (1105b2–12; trans. Irwin [1999])

So does Aristotle still hold MP-act, as he seemed to in 11.1–3? This passage is flanked by two references to HP; HP is the way that a person becomes virtuous and thus ends up, especially, deciding on actions for their own sakes and having a firm and unchanging character. It is right to say, then, that performing actions of the appropriate type is a necessary condition for becoming virtuous and good.⁸ This passage is followed by Aristotle criticizing those who would take refuge in *logoi* and thereby take themselves to be philosophizing instead of doing the hard work of engaging in actions of the appropriate type – just like patients who listen carefully to the regimen a doctor prescribes, but then do not follow it.⁹ What this makes clear, at least, is that certain actions are “to-be-done” and only by doing them does one become virtuous and good.

evaluation of what was done and there is the evaluation of *how* it was done – was it done *as* the virtuous or craftsperson would do it? So where is the disanalogy? (I thank Rachel Barney for raising this issue with me.) Taylor (2006), pp. 83–84, also finds Aristotle’s claim that there is a disanalogy troubling. All he believes is justified is that there are criteria necessary for an expert’s action to be the action of a craft, just as there are for virtue. The difference between the craftsperson and the virtuous person is going to consist in what those criteria are. What Aristotle seems to want to say is that, in the case of virtue, if the virtuous action is not done *as* the virtuous person would do it, then that means that something about the action *itself* is defective; whereas this is not the case with crafts. But one might continue to object by challenging this idea and claiming that it is simply stipulation, unless a more basic disanalogy between craft and virtue can be found. Since the “two-level” evaluation itself holds for both craft and virtue, it cannot be the location of the disanalogy. Either there is no disanalogy then, and Aristotle is wrong to say there is, or the key to understanding it must lie in the second two agent-conditions, not in the first. The philosophical point is that if I am generous towards someone because I am being paid to behave that way by someone else, then not only am I not really generous, neither is my *act*. The disanalogy with craft is that whether I make a piece of furniture because I am paid to do it or I make a piece of furniture because I value furniture making as an artistic activity, the piece of furniture (and the excellence of it) is not affected either way. But the act of “being generous” is. There is no argument for this, but I don’t think it is therefore merely stipulative; it is a deep intuition about ethics.

⁸ Broadie (1991), pp. 83–84, recognizes this and describes the point as one “which is obvious but can easily fall out of focus.”

⁹ For a discussion of this passage and the claim that it is aimed at a Socratic position, see Vasiliou (2007), pp. 55–57.

Despite this, however, it is still claimed that Aristotle believes in the “primacy of character” and that it is allegedly in this passage that Aristotle makes that clear.¹⁰ Christopher Taylor describes the thesis of “primacy of character” as follows:

The ultimate object of ethical evaluation is the agent, not particular actions or action-types; particular actions and action-types are evaluated as evincing traits of character which are themselves good (virtues) or bad (vices), and traits of character are in turn evaluated as those which a good (virtuous) or bad (vicious) agent would manifest.¹¹

According to Taylor, the proof text for this is 1105b5–9 (the italicized lines in the quotation above). He comments as follows:

Aristotle here assigns definitional priority to the agent over the act: the virtuous agent is not defined as one who does acts which fall under specific virtue descriptions, such as “courageous” or “just”; rather, courageous acts are defined as the sort of thing that the courageous person does, etc. His theory is therefore an “agent-centred”, as opposed to an “act-centred” one. (94)¹²

Let’s suppose initially that “definitional priority” is closely related to “metaphysical priority.” Think of “definition” once again in a sense common to Plato and Aristotle as a statement of the essence of X – what makes X the thing that it is – and not in a sense having to do with the meanings of words. So, if X is prior by definition to Y, then X can be defined (we can say what it is to be X) without any reference to Y. Moreover, if we hold MP-act, then acts would be prior in definition to agents; if we hold MP-agent, the other way round. Thus Taylor is claiming that 1105b5–9 means that Aristotle holds MP-agent. As Taylor clearly recognizes, we have a circle here; as I have pointed out above, if we keep in mind HP (as the passage above clearly emphasizes) we have more than an uninformative circle – we have a vicious one, since it is impossible both that virtuous actions *become* virtuous by being done by virtuous agents and that virtuous agents *become* virtuous by doing virtuous actions.

The reason I emphasize this as a question of metaphysical priority is because I think MP has been tangled up with a distinct but closely related set of issues; for the sake of parallelism, let’s call them as a group issues concerning “Epistemological Priority” (EP). EP concerns how virtuous

¹⁰ This is one of the central theses that is supposed to make Aristotle the inspirer of “virtue ethics.” Since it is a vexed and disputed question just what “virtue ethics” is, I prefer to examine the issue thesis by thesis.

¹¹ Taylor (2006), p. xvi.

¹² Taylor refers to Julia Annas (1981), pp. 157–60, to clarify the distinction between act- and agent-centered theories.

actions and agents are recognized, and by whom. I shall distinguish different positions about EP below, but I want to stay for the moment with Taylor's development of the issue.¹³ The paragraph that immediately follows the one above begins as follows:

The distinction [between agent- and act-centered theories] requires that it be possible to identify the virtuous agent independently of that agent's doing virtuous acts. Virtuous acts of type T being identified as those which are done by the T-type agent (e.g., "courageous acts are those done by the courageous agent"), we must have a sufficiently informative specification of the agent to allow us to identify the acts in question. Conditions (i)–(iii) above are intended to satisfy this requirement. (94)

I want to call attention to the shift from talk of definitional priority to talk about (the possibility of) identification. To have an agent-centered theory is to hold the definitional priority of the agent and, I have assumed thus far, MP-agent. Insofar as identification carries epistemological implications – i.e., is about how we come to recognize/identify agents and actions as being of the type they are – it is quite distinct from issues of definitional or metaphysical priority. Everyone knows and agrees that "courageous agents do courageous acts" but the *Euthyphro* question arises here: are courageous acts courageous because they are done by a courageous person (MP-agent); or does the courageous person do what he does because it is courageous (MP-act)? To move to talk about how we *identify* virtuous agents or acts is another matter altogether (note in the passage above "*we* must have a sufficiently informative specification of the agent to allow *us* to identify the acts ..." [my emphases]). Consider water. What it is to be water is to have the molecular structure H₂O. But, as a matter of fact, I have *never* identified water this way, and I might never be able to use the essence of water in order to identify instances of it (if, say, I never get access to a microscope or if I do not know what the molecular structure H₂O looks like).

I suggest then that the sentence of Taylor's quoted above – "Virtuous acts of type T being identified as those which are done by the T-type agent (e.g., 'courageous acts are those done by the courageous agent'), we must have a sufficiently informative specification of the agent to allow us to identify the acts in question" – is misleading as it stands. If we take the first "being identified" instead to mean, more consistently, "being defined as" (i.e., MP-agent), it does not follow that we must be able to have a way

¹³ This is not unique to Taylor: see also Annas (1981) and Santas (1997), with references to Schneewind (1990).

of identifying virtuous agents. All that follows from an “agent-centered” theory, understood as a theory about what *makes* actions virtuous, is that an action’s being done by a T-type agent is what *makes* the action an action of type T. Now, this may simply be true (if MP-agent is true), without there being any way to use this knowledge of what it is to be a T-type action in order to *identify* any token (or type) action as a T-action. Questions about “identification” (i.e., epistemological issues) are being blurred with questions about “definition” or “essence” (i.e., metaphysical issues). It is important to me, however, that we keep the water example in mind: a thing’s essence may be utterly different from the criteria we use to identify that thing.

Taylor recognizes that the agent conditions generate a problem for Aristotle.¹⁴ The first two conditions (knowing, and deciding on virtuous acts for their own sake) seem to involve an act’s already *being*, say, courageous (and, *independently*, then being identified by the courageous agent *as* courageous), which MP-agent would seem to rule out. Taylor continues:

Aristotle’s claim is that the only totally general specification of a kind of act falling under a virtue-type T is “the sort of act that the T agent does” ... The agent can know that this instance of handing over money is just *qua* paying a debt without its being true that either handing over money or paying debts is always just. Nor need the agent be in possession of any general rule for determining in precisely what circumstances paying one’s debts is or is not just. The agent’s knowledge may be of the case-by-case type which governs our mastery of many everyday concepts. There is, then, no vicious circularity in Aristotle’s claim that a necessary condition of an agent’s being T is that he or she should know that this is an instance of a T-type action, even when the only general specification of “T-type action” available to the agent is “action such that a T agent would do.” (95)

Reading this paragraph might make one think that I have misconstrued the best understanding of the whole issue of “primacy of character” by thinking of it as a view that holds MP-agent. Rather, a better reading of Taylor and the issue as a whole might be to understand his “definitional priority” as an epistemological thesis concerning how we identify token actions. Clearly the quotation here depends on there *being*, metaphysically, token actions of type T, independently of who performs them. The agent’s “case-by-case knowledge” suggests what I call elsewhere that the virtuous agent is a “virtuous action detector.” This part of being a

¹⁴ See too Whiting (2002a), pp. 276–79.

virtuous agent is true almost by definition – the virtuous agent gets the token action *right* – that is, he correctly identifies what action is to be done in the here and now. The issue then seems to be the epistemological one of *how* he does this. So the priority thesis that Taylor wishes to ascribe to Aristotle might better be put as follows:

Epistemological Priority of the Agent (EP – agent): one comes to know virtuous agents first, and then comes to know virtuous actions as the actions that those agents perform.

Taylor is ascribing to Aristotle some form of particularism that holds Metaphysical Priority of the Act, but also the Epistemological Priority of the Agent. There is no general specification of courageous actions – we can't say what they all have in common other than that the courageous person does them – but the courageous person is able to identify token courageous actions. So, token virtuous actions must be metaphysically prior to a token virtuous agent, since the virtuous agent must correctly identify the token action as virtuous – and, indeed, this is part of what makes a virtuous person virtuous. So it seems that MP-agent is rejected after all.

The only thing being denied then is that there is some informative general criterion (i.e., other than all courageous actions being *courageous* or all virtuous actions *virtuous*) according to which one can identify all and only courageous actions – there is no general principle or rule that determines what is courageous and what is not.¹⁵ If there were such a rule, then a person could in theory come to know virtuous actions first, and then identify agents as those who perform such actions (that is, one might hold the *Epistemological Priority of the Act*). But since, *ex hypothesi*, there is no way of articulating what all virtuous actions have in common (via a rule or general principle), there is no way of knowing or identifying virtuous acts for oneself other than sharing the perspective of the virtuous person.

THE AGENT-CONDITIONS

Let's turn back to II.4. First, contrary to what Taylor claims (p. 94, quoted above), I deny that the three agent-conditions are supposed to be criteria for the *identification* of a virtuous agent rather than criteria for the *definition* of a virtuous agent. Aristotle is saying *what it is to be* a virtuous agent, and this may or may not be how we identify one. Construing the

¹⁵ Irwin (2000) rejects this reading of Aristotle. I am not concerned to attack or defend it here.

agent-conditions as conditions for identification involves a whole host of problems, including questions about who the “we” are that are doing the identifying – are “we” non-virtuous people who are trying to identify virtuous people? Or is the issue how a virtuous person identifies *himself* as virtuous (i.e., knows that he is virtuous)? Or is it how one virtuous person identifies another? Even if what it is to be a virtuous person stays the same, how different types of people identify the virtuous person and what the third-person vs. first-person criteria for identification are may well be entirely different. Furthermore, there is no textual indication in 11.4 that Aristotle is concerned with how anyone identifies the virtuous person rather than with providing an account of what it is to be a virtuous person – this is what the agent conditions do.

Next, where does Aristotle stand with respect to MP-act? This is more complex. First, we should recognize that he clearly rejects MP-agent. There are actions, which Aristotle himself repeatedly describes as temperate, just, courageous, and so on, that are “to be done” in certain circumstances. The first agent-condition, knowing, is about identifying these acts. Aristotle proceeds in 11.6, in the elaboration of the “Doctrine of the Mean,” to describe the virtuous person as the one who has feelings and actions “at the right times, about the right things, towards the right people, for the right end, and in the right way” (1106b21–22) and to emphasize that while there are many ways to go wrong, there is only one way to go right (1106b28–35). For Aristotle the virtuous person manifestly *gets it right* and in this sense what is the right or virtuous action in some circumstances C has nothing to do with the state of the agent. To this extent, he accepts MP-act.

At the same time, however, Aristotle’s distinction in 11.4 between doing what the virtuous person would do and doing an action *as* the virtuous person would do it allows us another dimension of assessment: whether an action has been well done. The comparison with craft, which we discussed earlier, is meant to indicate two things. First, there is a weaker claim about *being a virtuous agent*, namely: there is more to being a virtuous agent than simply doing what the virtuous person would do (i.e., more than simply doing virtuous actions); the agent-conditions spell out what more is involved. But there is also a stronger claim, according to which virtue is allegedly disanalogous to craft. (And this may be Aristotle’s singular contribution, and arguably his advance on Plato.) Unlike craft, the “product” of virtue – the virtuous action – is *itself* affected by the state of the agent. Its nature is not *determined by* the agent’s state – as MP-agent

would have it – but it is nonetheless affected by it. To this extent, Aristotle does not entirely accept MP-act.

The first agent condition focuses on the action itself (i.e., correctly identifying what the virtuous action is in the circumstances), but is only about the assessment of the agent. I shall argue below that the third condition – having a firm and unchangeable character – also affects only our assessment of the *agent*, and not the assessment of the *action*. The second condition, by contrast, is about *both* agent *and* action. I am arguing that the action is affected *only* by the second agent-condition – the requirement that the action be chosen and chosen for its own sake. Aristotle believes that there are actions that are “right” and “virtuous” (and so “to-be-done”) in certain circumstances, but he also believes that how they are chosen (and in particular whether they are chosen for their own sakes) affects the nature of those actions. Thus Aristotle has a two-tiered account of virtuous action, and a qualified acceptance of MP-act. There are actions that he, following general usage, calls “courageous,” “just,” “temperate,” and so forth but then there is also a way of doing them (namely, for their own sakes) that makes them “well done” and genuinely excellent. So, for an action to be “truly” or “genuinely” or “fully” virtuous, one must do the right thing (which is independent of the state of the agent) but also, as we say, for the right reason (which *is* dependent on the state of the agent).

Let’s take a closer look at the second condition. The claim that the virtuous person chooses actions for their own sakes is part of Aristotle’s view that doing the virtuous thing trumps any other end one might have in action. To put his position in terms familiar from Socrates in the *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Gorgias*: it is never right to do wrong, i.e., to act contrary to virtue. Aristotle believes this as strongly as Socrates does, although this fact is somewhat hidden because of the prominence of his eudaimonism. Of course Aristotle says that happiness is the most final and highest end; indeed in 1.7 (1097a34–b5) he says that even if we choose pleasure, honor, understanding, and virtue in themselves, we *also* choose them for the sake of eudaimonia, whereas it is *only* eudaimonia that we choose only for its own sake and never for the sake of anything further.¹⁶ We should remember that Aristotle argues in the *N.E.* that eudaimonia is *not* a state, as the substantive suggests, but an activity (*energeia*). Thus happiness is something we *do*. A token courageous act may be understood at one and the same time as what the virtuous action is at the moment *and also* as

¹⁶ See Whiting (2002a) for one persuasive account of how these claims can be compatible and not sully the nature of virtue.

what “doing” happiness is at that moment. What I am claiming is that on Aristotle’s account there could never be a token action that was contrary to virtue, but nevertheless a “doing” of happiness. One cannot make oneself genuinely happier by acting contrary to virtue; after all, Aristotle’s definition of happiness is “rational activity *in accordance with virtue*.” So Aristotle is committed to what I call “the Supremacy of Virtue” (SV).¹⁷

As Christine Korsgaard discusses, Aristotle talks about virtuous actions in three ways: (1) as done for the sake of the noble (*kalon*); (2) as chosen for their own sake; and (3) in some specific cases described as being done for specific purposes (for instance, a courageous person may die in battle for the sake of his city-state or his friend, 1169a17–30).¹⁸ If these were to express three distinct aims one might have in doing some token courageous action, Aristotle’s account would be in trouble. Korsgaard sees the solution in recognizing that Aristotle’s notion of action (*praxis*) is broader so that it includes something like “doing X for the sake of Y” (e.g., dying for the sake of one’s city-state), and then to claim that “dying for the sake of one’s city-state” is what is done for its own sake, or, equivalently, for the sake of the noble.¹⁹

Jennifer Whiting focuses on the relationship between (2) and (3) using the example of generous actions.²⁰ She argues that in Aristotle’s account of generosity it is clear that a generous person aims to benefit others and to secure the most important benefits she can provide. She continues:

The important point here is that stereotypically generous actions typically aim at the external result of benefiting others. It is of course true that one can aim at such a result either for itself (as, for example, when one acts simply in order to benefit others) or from some ulterior motive (as, for example, when one aims to benefit others primarily in order to display one’s wealth). And someone who aims at such results from some ulterior motive will perform generous actions not for themselves but only coincidentally. Only someone who aims at such a *result for itself* will succeed in performing a virtuous *action for itself*. (p. 278, her emphases)

The point I wish to take from Korsgaard and Whiting²¹ is that one can do “X for the sake of Y” itself for its own sake, or for the sake of something

¹⁷ For further discussion of SV and its role in Plato’s ethics, see Vasilou (2008).

¹⁸ Korsgaard (1996), pp. 216–17.

¹⁹ I don’t deny that deciding on something “for its own sake” and deciding on something “for the sake of the noble” may carry with them importantly different nuances; see Richardson Lear (2004), Chapter 6. The point is that they are equivalent in terms of the evaluation of the agent’s character.

²⁰ Whiting (2002a). ²¹ See also Williams (1995).

further. So, staying with the example of generosity, I may donate money to alleviate hunger for its own sake, or I may donate money to alleviate hunger for the sake of winning political office. If I make a decision to donate in the former way then I am, on Whiting's account, acting generously "for its own sake" or "for the sake of the noble" – that is, I am meeting the second agent-condition. This is what makes plausible the idea that it is something about the state of the agent – whether the agent decides on the action for its own sake – that has an effect on the nature of the action itself. For "donating money to alleviate hunger for its own sake" and "donating money to alleviate hunger for the sake of winning political office" are two ethically different actions.

MOTIVE VS. END

In my final two sections I shall argue for a distinction between (a) being committed to doing the virtuous thing above all (The Supremacy of Virtue [SV]) and (b) the motivation for being so committed. A large part of the problem with interpreting Aristotle, and indeed with clarifying the philosophical issues involved, stems from the term "motivation."²² As we have seen, what is central to SV is one's *end*: that virtue trumps any other end one may have in acting. And this has to do with meeting the second agent-condition.

In ordinary language it can be difficult to distinguish between ends and motives; the words "end" and "motive" are often used synonymously. Despite their close connection, however, I shall distinguish between them. An agent's end is what the agent wants to realize in action, what the agent wants to bring about. For reasons that will become clear, I also want to think of an agent's end in terms of *setting the problem* she needs to solve.²³ Begin with a clear case of instrumental reasoning: if my goal is to build a house, how to build a house is the problem that this end sets for me. Thus if I do X for the sake of Y, Y sets the problem that I am interested in solving.

²² There are no words in ancient Greek or classical Latin that translate as "motive" (as either an adjective or noun), "motivation," or "to motivate." "Motive" appears in fourteenth-century English and Middle French (*motif*), stemming from fourth- and fifth-century post-classical Latin *motivus*.

²³ I think this way of speaking will be relevant to all cases, but is more natural in cases where there is a specific puzzle or conundrum, less natural in cases calling for quick action (e.g., saving a child who has fallen in a river, etc.).

Keeping in mind the broad notion of action from Korsgaard and Whiting, I want to draw a contrast between X's being *motivated by* Y and X's being done *for the sake of* Y, where Y is the end of X (where X is an action in that broad sense). When I do X *motivated by* (rather than *for the sake of*) Y, then I am not doing X for the sake of anything further. In ordinary speech, I have no "ulterior motive," which simply means that I have no further end or aim I desire to bring about by my action. What I care about, ultimately, is doing X, despite the fact that my *attachment to* doing X stems from Y.²⁴ Let's think about ends as setting problems for the agent: if the agent does X motivated by Y, then the problem the agent is trying to solve is how to bring about X. If, by contrast, the agent does X for the sake of Y, then Y is the agent's end and the problem she is trying to solve is how to bring about Y. This can seem to be a distinction without a difference; but I want to offer a couple of examples in order to persuade you that that is not so.

It is probably true (odd though it initially sounds) that most professional philosophers are motivated by fame and fortune to do philosophy, where "doing philosophy" is conceived of, for the purposes of this example, as writing philosophy books and articles. Thus if I couldn't earn any money by doing philosophy (by getting a Ph.D. and a job as a professor, being promoted, and so on) and/or if I could somehow be certain that no one would ever read my work or know I had written it (imagine some stranded-on-a-desert-island scenario), my *motivation* to write philosophy would be far less than it now is, and perhaps I would even give it up altogether. So I fail to be a "purist" in the sense that I am not motivated by philosophy alone to do philosophy.²⁵ Nevertheless it would be wrong to say that I (or most other academic philosophers) do philosophy *for the sake of* fame and fortune, as though the problem I set myself to solve is (was) how to achieve fame and fortune, and then I decide that doing philosophy is the best way. If fame and fortune were my *ends*, then if there were an opportunity (as one can easily imagine there would be) to realize fame and fortune better than by doing philosophy, I would pursue that instead. What most academic philosophers are aiming at, what their end is, is doing the best philosophical work they can, even if it is true that they are *motivated by* (wholly or partly) fame and fortune. The latter makes it the case that

²⁴ For the moment, let's set aside "unconscious" ends or motivations; I discuss that complication briefly below. There are plenty of cases where such unconscious aims are not relevant.

²⁵ I don't mean to rule out such a character. Perhaps there are philosophers who would write essays each morning in the sand, knowing they would be washed away and never read. But if there are such people, their philosophical work is not itself more excellent because of it.

they might abandon writing philosophy books and articles were all prospects of fame and fortune cut off, but the former ensures that the *problem* they are solving is how to do the best philosophy (how to get philosophical problems resolved correctly), not how to achieve fame and fortune. One point I wish to emphasize here is that the quality of a philosopher's *work*, that is the excellence with which she has addressed philosophical problems, is not affected at all by whether she is motivated by fame and fortune or motivated "purely" by philosophy itself. In particular her work is in no way better if it is motivated by philosophy alone.

By contrast think of cases where fame and fortune shift from being motives and become ends. A philosopher's end is now not simply doing the best philosophy she can, but, for example, to reach a broader audience and sell a lot of books. This is of course not necessarily a contemptible aim or end, but we immediately see how it would affect the nature of her work, since the problem she is trying to solve has changed.

Another, and rather timely, example that may be helpful to consider is capitalism run amok. It is one thing for profit to function as a motive for people to innovate and to realize new ideas that may be valuable to the society as a whole. When profit functions as a motive, in the specific sense I am describing, then the agent may be concerned with, for example, how to reduce pollution, and solving this problem is her end, even if it is true that she is motivated to solve it (wholly or in part) by the prospect of making money. As far as I understand it, this is supposed to be one of the intuitive benefits of capitalism: by allowing people to privately own the fruits of their labor (and thereby profit from them), they will be motivated to solve problems for the good of society as a whole. By contrast, in some sort of socialist economic system, this line of thinking continues, no one is motivated to innovate or to solve society's problems because there is nothing in it for her: it would be like writing philosophy papers no one will ever read. This concept of capitalism is perverted, however, once profit moves from a *motive* to an *end*. When profit becomes the *end*, then the *problem* the agent is concerned with is how to make the most money; money is no longer simply an incentive to solve some *other* problem. Once one's *end* is profit, then, instead of solving problems about recycling or health care, one will only be concerned with solving the problem of making the most money,²⁶ which, as we have recently seen, leads one not to

²⁶ I am not assuming that having something as an end will always require that it be maximized; one doesn't want to do the *most* philosophy (whatever that would mean), but the best. In the case of money as an end, however, the "best" realization of it is presumably having the most.

do anything or make anything, except to invent schemes for generating profit by whatever means.²⁷

What it is to be a virtuous person is to be committed to doing the virtuous action as one's final *end*. This is not to be confused with the *motivation for being so committed*. If a person is committed to doing the virtuous action above all, as Aristotle's *phronimos* most definitely is, *then* the person will be motivated above all to do the virtuous action for its own sake; that is, she will have no further end to her action (1140b7: "acting well [*eupraxia*] is itself the end"). *Why* a person *is* or *should be* so committed are distinct questions. Why a person *should be* so committed is the question of one familiar type of moral skeptic; to the extent that Aristotle supplies an answer to such a person it involves the excellent functioning of his soul. But what *makes* a person so committed, and, ideally, "in a firm and unchanging way" is his habituation.²⁸

So, in a nutshell, the importance of the three agent-conditions is as follows:

- (1) "knowing" indicates the necessity of correctly identifying what must be done;
- (2) deciding on the action and deciding on it for its own sake indicates the necessity of having the right *end* in the technical sense I have just delimited; the end is to do the virtuous action;
- (3) acting from a firm and unchanging condition indicates the necessity of having an adequately strong commitment to being motivated in the way that (2) says one is.

What I have wanted to emphasize, then, is that (2) and (3) are quite distinct: the former is about one's commitment to SV, the latter is about the attachment to being so committed. Further, the way that the state of the agent enters into the assessment of an action is via the agent's *end*

²⁷ Consider also Plato's *Crito*. Socrates secures Crito's agreement to SV prior to addressing the substantive question of whether or not he should escape from prison *not* because he wants to make sure that he and Crito are acting from the right *motive*. Rather he wants to be sure that they have the right *end* and are therefore addressing the right *problem*, namely, what is the virtuous action in the here and now: remaining in prison or fleeing? Commitment to SV requires that the rightness or wrongness of an action be the determining ground of choice. Crito's *motive* for recommending escape might be love for Socrates, or the desire to save Socrates' life, but Socrates' point is that the problem that must be solved is not what action will save his life, or benefit his children, but which action *is* the right one. For a full defense of this reading, see Vasiliou (2008), Chapter 2.

²⁸ It is clear from 11.4 that habituation is what effects this commitment to virtue and makes it strong and lasting. I argue in Vasiliou (2007), however, that habituation alone is not sufficient to keep this commitment in place according to Aristotle. Aristotle believes that argument (such as is found in places in the *N.E.*) also plays an important role.

in acting, i.e. via the second agent condition, and not via the *motive* the agent has for being so committed.

ENDS AND MOTIVES: SOME OBJECTIONS

I have argued that what is important, and what Aristotle believes is important, about acting virtuously is that one has no further end in acting;²⁹ such is the commitment to virtue of the person of practical wisdom – the *phronimos*. It ensures that he does the right thing for the right reason. Acting virtuously as one's supreme end makes one's actions importantly non-accidental. It is not simply that one's end is making money and in this token set of circumstances what makes money happens to be the honest action (think of Kant's shopkeeper example).

What motivates the *phronimos* to be so committed is a *different* question, however, and is important for different reasons. I conclude by arguing that what motivates the virtuous person to be so committed does not matter for the ethical quality of his action. What we and Aristotle want is for there to be a long-standing, stable commitment to virtue; how best to bring this about may be a question for empirical psychology.

Consider an example from Rosalind Hursthouse of someone who is ordinarily objectionably self-serving in her ends but who sets virtue as her end for a week – that is, for a week she solves problems about what is virtuous (or not contrary to virtue) in her actions because, in Hursthouse's example, she is in love or has had recent professional success.³⁰ Aristotle never considers someone who, as in Hursthouse's example but in my language, would ordinarily act with the end of being self-serving, but who suddenly, for one week, acts with the end of doing the right thing, motivated by having had professional success. I would argue, however, that there is nothing whatsoever wrong or faulty with this woman's actions or character (i.e., what she does or why she does it) during that one week. For that one week she is as she should be and acts as she should; she acts as the virtuous person would. After that, when she returns to having her non-virtuous ends, if she then does what the virtuous person would do it is, at best, an accident, since it coincides with what achieves her non-virtuous ends. But during that week, *ex hypothesi*, she is acting with the right end in view: virtue.

²⁹ Understanding action as explained above to include something like "jumping in the river in order to save the child."

³⁰ Hursthouse (1999a); I am here treating the problems she raises in Chapter 6.

What bothers Hursthouse and others, however, is that even though she has no further end (during her “virtuous week”), she is motivated to take virtue as her end not by some “pure” motive, but by a love affair or by recent professional success. Once that motivation passes, her commitment to virtue lapses, and her former non-virtuous ends re-emerge. That is sad, but it is the same for any motivation whatsoever for being committed to virtue. I may have had the best habituation ever, and so come to love the *kalon* for its own sake and to delight in doing virtuous actions. All this means is that my motivation for being committed to virtue above all is the love and joy I take in virtuous action inculcated in me via habituation. (Again, I emphasize, that this is distinct from the commitment itself, which is the fact that I *do* take virtue to be my supreme end, regardless of the reason *why* I do.) This too could lapse, if, as Aristotle arguably envisages in the case of Priam, terrible misfortune derails my commitment to virtue. Perhaps after a series of terrible events, I no longer delight in virtue – I just don’t care anymore.³¹

I think that one might be puzzled about the plausibility of someone who had virtuous ends for just one week (never before or after?). But leaving that issue aside, what is important to Aristotle and the rest of us is the stability of a person’s being so committed. What counts towards the evaluation of her character – as Aristotle says in the third agent-condition – is that it be “firm and unchanging”; he does not prescribe what the motivation (in my technical sense) is for that attachment. And – I’ll say provocatively – who cares what it is, as long as it is stable? Again: we care about an agent’s commitment to an end (and of course about the end to which he is committed), but not why he is so committed.

Another worry might arise that my distinction between motive and end, while perhaps clear in artificial and abstract cases, will be woefully unclear in practice. As an example,³² consider Angela, who acts virtuously

³¹ Of course here is where Kant is supposed to come in and point out that I still have a duty to act morally, whether or not I have an inclination to. In fact, on many readings of Kant (but not ones I favor) it is *only* in such a situation where I act against inclination that my action will have moral worth. But what does this claim amount to? If it says that, morally speaking, I should always be moral/virtuous – then of course it is correct. If it tells me that a person ought to struggle to do the right thing, even when they no longer want to, then that too is true even for Aristotle; continence is a far better condition than incontinence. If it suggests that an abstract argument about my rational autonomy will be especially persuasive at keeping me committed to virtue (or following the categorical imperative) in times of severe stress, then that is a (more dubious) empirical claim. I don’t mean, however, to say that it is false. Even if it is rare, it is certainly possible to act from a sense of duty, contrary to one’s inclination. Aristotle seems to see this in his remarks about the courageous person, who sacrifices his life despite the fact that he, *qua* virtuous, has a life most worth living.

³² Hursthouse (1999a), pp. 133–36, and Herman (1993), pp. 13–14, both consider such cases.

reliably and steadily and, asked why she does so, responds "Because God wants me to and by acting this way I will go to heaven when I die." This is usually as far as such examples are described, but it is not far enough to capture the distinction I am drawing between motive and end. Is Angela's *end* to do the right thing, while being motivated to be committed to this end by the prospect of salvation? Or is her ultimate end salvation, and doing the right thing a mere means? How can we (or in fact she) tell? Well, the issue turns on what problem she is trying to solve. If salvation is her end, then she is going to be interested primarily in theology and determining what it is that God wants, for the problem she is solving is how to get to heaven. But if she is in the former camp then she is aiming at doing the right thing for its own sake (with no further end), although she is motivated to be so committed by her faith (rather than, or perhaps in conjunction with, say, her habituation and her acquaintance with Kant's arguments about the rational autonomy of human beings). It may be true that if her faith lapses, then she will no longer be committed to virtue; but that is a worry for any source of motivation whatsoever. A human being's attachment to the commitment to the moral may cease, lapse, or be intermittent. But this is very different from the commitment itself, which, for as long as it lasts, constitutes acting as the virtuous person would.

How do we know when fame and fortune have become our ends instead of merely our motivation? Evidence may arise in cases of conflict. When glory and virtue conflict, then we may see what one's ultimate end is and what is merely part of one's motivation. When being true to one's philosophical beliefs means doing philosophy that has less prospect of leading to fame and fortune, does one persevere nonetheless, doing the best philosophy one can, still perhaps motivated by the prospect of being properly appreciated for one's work, or does one change the work to achieve the ends of fame and fortune?

This question captures another feature of the difference between a motive and an end. If a person is motivated by the habituated delight she ordinarily takes in virtuous action to take virtue as her end that does not imply that if in some token circumstance a virtuous action is not going to delight her or bring her joy (perhaps it will even generate a negative feeling on her part, or, in an extreme case, even lead to her death), she will fail to do it; for virtue is her end, not the feeling of joy. The feeling of joy is not part of the *reason why* she acts; the reasons all have to do with what is virtuous. Joy is simply what has effected her being committed to being the sort of person who acts for those reasons. By contrast, if feeling joy

in acting were her *end*, then she would have no reason (as far as she was concerned) to act in any circumstance in a way that did not bring her joy. Thus an agent's reasons for action are her ends, not what motivates her to be committed to those ends.³³

³³ I thank audiences at the Graduate Center, City University of New York and at the University of Toronto for their remarks; in particular I am grateful to Jonathan Adler, Hendrik Lorenz, and Ben Morison. I am most indebted to Matt Evans for lengthy discussions about these issues as well as for written comments on earlier drafts.

*Perfecting pleasures: The metaphysics of pleasure
in Nicomachean Ethics X*

Christopher Shields

I BABBLING ABOUT PLEASURE

According to G. E. M. Anscombe, pleasure was the topic that finally and “astonishingly reduced Aristotle to babble, since for good reasons he both wanted pleasure to be identical with and to be different from the activity that it is pleasure in.”¹ That is by any measure a harsh judgment – *babble*, she says: inarticulate, incomprehensible, childish prattle.

She does allow that Aristotle was reduced to this sorry state for good reasons; so, she evidently thinks that there is a partially exculpatory diagnosis for his woes. Woes he has, however: as she represents him, Aristotle fumbles and stumbles over himself twice over. He first identifies pleasure with an activity and then denies that it is an activity. That is perhaps not so bad in itself, since he may after all simply have changed his mind; but when he denies that pleasure is an activity, he does so for all the wrong reasons. Instead of relying on the sensible thought that pleasure is not an *activity* but rather a *feeling*, Aristotle instead offers a bewildering corrective: “Pleasure,” he says, “perfects the activity (*energeia*), not in the way a state (*hexis*) does, by being in the activity, but as a sort of supervening end (*telos*)” (*teleioi de tēn energeian hē hēdonē ouk hōs hē hexis enuparchousa, all’ hōs epiginomenon ti telos*; *E.N.* 1174b31–33). If Aristotle is not babbling here, then neither is his meaning exactly pellucid. At the very least, it seems an overly technical treatment of what is at root a perfectly familiar phenomenon. Pleasure, we may be assured, is a feeling, a welcome sensation of some sort, a sensation of satisfaction or gratification, in general an enjoyable or delightful experience. Aristotle’s account of pleasure – if it is intelligible at all – seems at the very least needlessly baroque.

As far as Anscombe is concerned, Aristotle’s woes do not end there. His failure to deny that pleasure is an activity for the right reason – that

¹ Anscombe (1976), p. 76.

it is a state and not an activity – further implicates him in a conflation of pleasures and their sources. That at any rate seems to be Anscombe's contention when she accuses Aristotle of at first identifying and then differentiating pleasure "from the activity that it is pleasure in." In so speaking, she suggests that one takes pleasure *in* certain activities and thereby derives pleasure *from* them; the activities themselves are not to be identified with the pleasures. She thus seems to be thinking of pleasure as a sort of psychological state, the sort of state typically derived from an activity – a pleasurable activity – and she faults Aristotle for, *inter alia*, mistaking the source of pleasure with the pleasure itself. If she is right, then in addition to contradicting himself and waxing incomprehensibly technical about a simple feeling, Aristotle is implicated in a low-level confusion, the confusion of mistaking various activities and the psychological states to which they give rise. Perhaps someone finds horseback riding at weekends pleasurable: the pleasure, Anscombe implies, is the psychological state felt by the rider, not the activity of riding itself, which may, after all, equally produce discomfort. If Aristotle cannot see even this, then his account of pleasure is hopeless.

Aristotle's account is not, however, hopeless: Anscombe's brief against him is wrong on all counts. Showing only so much, however, sets the bar rather low. If the best we can say on behalf of Aristotle's account of pleasure is that it is better than babble, then that does little to commend his view to us. Accordingly, I argue in addition that Aristotle's view of pleasure, although cast in technical terms, is well motivated, and entirely feasible. To understand that Aristotle's views are coherent, and indeed defensible, we need only work to understand the terms in which he casts his account. Pleasure, as he says in his final account in the last book of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, perfects an activity, a perceptual or intellectual activity to be precise, as a sort of supervenient end. To evaluate his view, then, we need to know what these claims mean and why Aristotle should be inclined to make them.

That said, a full-scale defense of Aristotle's approach to pleasure does not fall within the purview of the present discussion. Instead, it serves to begin with the problem Anscombe says provided good reason for Aristotle's unfortunate conclusion, that he offers incompatible accounts of pleasure in two separate discussions within his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Many studies have been devoted to reconciling these two apparently incompatible accounts, while several others have concluded that they are simply irreconcilable. It proves useful to review the literature on this topic briefly, if only because so much scholarship concerning

Aristotle's approach to pleasure has been conducted within this general framework.

The ultimate aim of the present chapter is not to come to a final ruling on the large question of consistency, but instead to characterize and motivate the most difficult contention of the second of Aristotle's two discussions of pleasure, which is given in *Nicomachean Ethics* x. That is enough of a chore. Aristotle's discussion of pleasure in *Nicomachean Ethics* x proceeds in unabashedly metaphysical terms, employing throughout technical terminology from other areas of his philosophy, including most notably his theories of change (*kinêsis*) and perception (*aisthêsis*). Once these terms are properly understood, it becomes clear that Aristotle's view of pleasure has much to commend it. Further, although this result is not developed in the present chapter, there is a happy by-product of this understanding: there is no real threat of inconsistency between Aristotle's two discussions in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Very roughly, the account of pleasure in *Nicomachean Ethics* x is articulated in broadly functional terms. That is, in this discussion he is suggesting that pleasure is as pleasure does, and what pleasure does is this: pleasure perfects a psychic activity, either perceptual or intellectual (*E.N.* 1174b14–1175a3). Just what this means, however, remains unclear. It will emerge that once Aristotle's meaning is properly grasped, his account is perfectly plausible – and also perfectly consistent with what he says about pleasure elsewhere in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

II PRELIMINARIES AND PROBLEMS ABOUT PLEASURE

We have already implicitly encountered a distinction that must be made explicit if we are to frame our discussion of pleasure in Aristotle adequately. When Anscombe contrasts pleasure with the activity the pleasure is *in*, she runs together two senses of "pleasure," which must be kept distinct, if only, at least initially, at the linguistic level. The distinction is simple, beginning with an uncontroversial linguistic observation, available for Greek or English indifferently. The word "pleasure" (like the word *hêdonê*) is used in two senses: one focuses on the phenomenal characteristics of pleasure and the other on the sources of such phenomenal characteristics. Neither use is idiosyncratic or uncommon; each is unproblematically accepted in customary usage in both Greek and English.

As reflected in the first usage, pleasure is a kind of affective state, a welcome sensation of some sort, often a feeling of satisfaction or gratification, an enjoyable or delightful experience. Most generically, in this, the

subjective sense,² pleasure is some manner of *positive affect*, as contemporary psychologists are apt to say, a primitive, introspectible, and perhaps indescribable state, or family of states,³ with an essential phenomenological core, known only by the acquaintance typically caused by experiences of the right sort, to wit, pleasurable ones.⁴

These pleasurable experiences provide a linguistic contrast class to pleasure in the subjective or phenomenal: they may be called pleasures in the *source* sense, which may be illustrated as follows. Let us say that we have a friend whose greatest pleasure in life is walking along the sea cliffs of Pembrokeshire; she never tires of this activity and spends every holiday pursuing it, in fair or foul weather. We may say of our friend that she takes great pleasure *in* cliff-walking, or that cliff-walking *brings* or *gives* or *causes* or *affords* her great pleasure. In almost every like instance (and most definitely in our example), the subject who experiences the pleasure is distinct from the source of his pleasure. Typically, not every moment of pleasurable activity need bring pleasure; perhaps climbing a treacherous rock formation in the rain causes her more consternation than pleasure, but she still regards cliff-walking as well worth pursuing.⁵ We are nonetheless justified in speaking of cliff-walking as one of her life's great pleasures, and we are accordingly justified in distinguishing the *source* from the *subjective* sense.⁶

Only in an unusually self-smitten person do the source and subjective sense coalesce; and even then, we would do well to keep them intensionally

² This terminology follows L. Katz, whose entry, "Pleasure," in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (www.plato.stanford.edu/entries/pleasure/) offers an overview of exemplary clarity of some of the tangled issues pertaining to philosophical accounts of pleasure.

³ This qualification indicates that, as used here, the subjective sense of pleasure does not presuppose univocity, or that all instances of pleasure are phenomenologically indistinguishable from one another. It seems extremely unlikely that Aristotle so regards pleasure. On the contrary, his account strongly suggests that pleasures, even subjective pleasures, vary: *EN* III.10, 1147b24–31, 1154a7–b5.

⁴ Locke characterizes pleasure along these lines. Pleasure and pains are, he says, "simple ideas" felt in response to certain sensations and are thus are to be distinguished from "sensation barely in itself," even if these ideas are acquirable only via such experience (*An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, II.xx.1).

⁵ Cf. Thomas Hardy, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, II.xi: "A few weeks ago you said that I was far sweeter than all your other pleasures put together, and that you would give them all up for me; and now, won't you give up this one, which is more a worry than a pleasure."

⁶ There is a passage in the discussion of pleasure in *Rhet.* I.11 which strongly confirms Aristotle's use of the source/subjective distinction. In fact, he seems practically to introduce it: "Let it be established for us that pleasure is a certain sort motion of the soul (*tên hêdonên kinêsin tina tês psuchais*), one which transpires all at once and is perceptible, one bringing it to indwelling nature (*katastasin aithroan kai aisthêtên eis tên huparchousan phusin*), and pain the opposite. And if pleasure is this sort of thing, that it is also clear that the pleasant (*hêdu*) is what is productive (*poiëtikon*) of the condition mentioned" (*Rhet.* 1369b33–1370a2).

distinct. In ordinary parlance, we call subjective experiences instances of pleasure or sensations of pleasure, but we also refer to the sources of such experiences as pleasures (or *hêdonai*). In English, as in Greek, we at times implicitly mark the distinction between source and subjective pleasures by speaking of the subjective sense as pleasure (*hêdonê*) and the source sense as something pleasant (*to hêdu*), but then, to muddy the waters slightly, we equally speak of activities or experiences of those activities indifferently as *pleasant*. So much, then, for the linguistic distinction. We may regiment it and extend it slightly for our purposes by distinguishing two types of pleasures, *source pleasures* and *subjective pleasures*.

One immediate question concerns whether Aristotle is attempting to give an account of source or subjective pleasures, or whether he is interested in both, or indeed whether he has simply failed to mark this (fairly obvious) distinction and is thus confused about this matter.

We should keep these questions in the background when we reflect upon the following three problems that have cropped up repeatedly in discussions of Aristotle's approach to pleasure. Various readers have found his views guilty of:

- *Inconsistency*: in *Nicomachean Ethics* vii, Aristotle defines pleasure as an "unimpeded activity" (*E.N.* 1153a15). In *Nicomachean Ethics* x, he says instead that pleasure "perfects (or completes) an activity" (*E.N.* 1174b24). On the (assailable) assumption that nothing that perfects an activity is itself an activity, these two accounts are incompatible.⁷
- *Circularity*: an interesting criticism owing to John Stuart Mill is little discussed in the recent literature on Aristotelian pleasure. According to Mill, the Aristotelian approach falls down because it defines pleasure in terms of those perceptual and intellectual processes most apt to give rise to pleasurable experiences, but then lacks the resources to characterize the relevant subset of perceiving and thinking which we would normally regard as pleasure-producing – beyond saying that they are

⁷ Noting that the *Nicomachean Ethics* contains not one but two distinct accounts of pleasure, Barnes (1997), pp. 58–59, arrived at the judgment that our "*EN* is an absurdity, surely put together by a desperate scribe or an unscrupulous bookseller and not united by an author or an editor." His primary grounds for reaching this conclusion: "That our *EN* is not a unity is beyond controversy – the existence of two treatments of pleasure is enough to prove the fact." Other critics have been less exercised. Hardie (1968), p. 304, for example, simply reports that according to Aristotle, pleasure "is an activity (*energeia*) or the completion of an activity." See also Stewart (1892), pp. 221–22n.1. Owen (1986b), p. 335, seeks to reconcile the accounts by putting them into different spheres: "Traditionally the question has been whether the two accounts are too divergent to be compatible. I hope to show that they are too divergent to be incompatible. They are neither competing nor cooperating answers to one question, but answers to two quite different questions."

the ones which give us pleasure. Since not all episodes of perception or thought give rise to pleasure, it is necessary to specify those that do, and at a bare minimum to distinguish them from those that cause not pleasure but pain. If all that can be said by way of identifying the relevant episodes of thought and perception is that they are the pleasant ones, then Mill is right, and no progress has been made: Aristotle's account of pleasure assumes what it is seeking to explain. Mill could then justly conclude that "This is simply making the fact its own theory."⁸

- *Incredibility/incomprehensibility*: these are in fact two distinct problems, but in practice they tend to blur together. Thus, a supporter of Anscombe's babbling allegation will give way when pressed to incredulity: to the degree that we can make sense of Aristotle's account of pleasure, we are bound to find it simply incredible. This is the attitude – which I understand to be completely non-eristic – reflected in a question of Bostock's: "Can Aristotle *really* have believed that what we enjoy is always an activity and never a process?"⁹ Minimally, says Bostock, we are bound to find Aristotle's view of pleasure "strange and unexpected."¹⁰

Bostock's conclusion is understandable, and his question is a good one – but it requires explication. For so far we have had no reason to distinguish activities from processes.

It will prove a good procedure to tackle these problems in reverse order, striving first simply to render Aristotle's account intelligible. Thereafter, we will be in a position to respond to the circularity objection, if only briefly, and finally, still more briefly, to the charge of inconsistency. As will emerge, these problems simply recede once Aristotle's metaphysics of pleasure is shown to be both comprehensible and credible.

On the point of comprehensibility and credibility, we may begin by reviewing the basic data of *Nicomachean Ethics* x.3–4.

III NICOMACHEAN ETHICS x.3–4: AGAINST REPLENISHMENT

Aristotle's account of pleasure in *Nicomachean Ethics* x.3–4 needs to be understood in its relation to the approach to pleasure recounted in Plato's

⁸ In fact, Mill's remarks are directed against the account of pleasure given by Hamilton, but it is abundantly clear that Hamilton's account is more than merely Aristotelian in inspiration: it is simply Aristotle's account. See Mill (1865), p. 262.

⁹ Bostock (2000), p. 160. He answers: "What I shall claim is that he really did believe that what we enjoy is always something mental, in particular it is either a perception or a thought, and he somehow takes it for granted that these mental occurrences will count as 'activities'."

¹⁰ Bostock (2000), p. 163.

Republic ix 583b–587b.¹¹ In that book of the *Republic* Plato characterizes pleasure as a process of replenishment. When the body lacks something it needs or wants – as when it is hungry or thirsty – it finds satisfaction in being replenished. In general, replenishment is a kind of process, a filling of a void. When, for instance, an empty tank is refilled with water, the act of filling is obviously a kind of process, with a beginning, middle, and end. So too is the replenishing of a body empty of food or drink. So, one might infer, this replenishment, this filling, is likewise a process. Further, since it is pleasurable to undergo this sort of replenishment, the inference lies near that pleasure just *is* this process of replenishment; so, pleasure is a process.

As presented, Plato's is an uncomplicated observation, attractive in its simplicity; but, according to Aristotle, it is also deeply flawed. While we do in fact take pleasure in eating or drinking, it would be wrong, contends Aristotle, to *identify* the pleasure with that process of replenishment. For in the first instance it would be an error to think of pleasure as a process (*kinêsis*). To appreciate why Aristotle should be so confident about this, let us consider two central texts, the first from *Nicomachean Ethics* x.3 and the second from the following chapter. Both argue for the same conclusion, that pleasure is not a process.

In *Nicomachean Ethics* x.3, Aristotle supports this conclusion with a whole series of short, crisp arguments. In this context, he is primarily trying to refute some arguments owing to Eudoxus, a member of Plato's Academy, who had been keen to reject hedonism, considered as the view that pleasure is the ultimate good for human beings. Towards this end, Eudoxus had offered some anti-hedonistic arguments, which Aristotle is keen to rebut, even though he, like Eudoxus, denies that pleasure is the final good. He aims to show that even if pleasure is not *the* good, it may nonetheless be *a* good:

Because they hold the good to be something complete (*teleion*), while processes (*kinêseis*) and comings-to-be (*geneseis*) are incomplete (*ateleis*), they endeavor to show that pleasure *is* a process and a coming-to-be. They seem to be wrong, however, since pleasure is not even a process. For its quickness and slowness are appropriately [applied] to every process, if not *per se* (as with the entire universe) then in relation to something else. But neither of these belongs to pleasure. For while it is possible to *become* pleased quickly, just as it is possible to *become* angry quickly, it is not possible to *be* pleased quickly, not even in relation to something else. But this is possible for walking and growing and all such things. So, while

¹¹ For Plato's attitude towards the theory of replenishment, or perceived replenishment, see Gosling and Taylor (1982), pp. 194–96. For Aristotle's objections to Plato's theory of pleasure, see Van Riel (2000b).

it is possible to move into pleasure quickly or slowly, it is not possible to be actually in the corresponding state – that is, to be pleased, quickly [or slowly]. (*E.N.* 1173a29–b4)

The crucial argument is simple enough: since it is possible to say of any given process that it may proceed quickly or slowly, while it is never possible to say that pleasure is quick or slow, or even that one is pleased or pained quickly or slowly, pleasure is not a process. Aristotle staves off a possible objection by conceding that one might *become* pleased, as one might *become* angry, quickly or slowly, but notes that just as *becoming angry* is not the same as *being angry*, so *becoming pleased* is not *being pleased*. What we are seeking, he implies, is not an account of coming to be pleased (*hêsthênai*) or of moving into a state of pleasure (*metaballein men oun eis ten hedonên*), but rather an account of being pleased (*hêdesthai*) or of pleasure (*hêdonê*) itself.

In arguing this way, Aristotle is appealing to implicit categorial differences between pleasures and processes. So, he is not simply appealing to some ordinary-language argument to the effect that we do not say, e.g., “Pleasure is quick.”¹² Rather, a process, in its very nature, can happen quickly or slowly; pleasure, in its very nature, is not – and cannot be – quick or slow. It simply is. If this is correct, then if Plato thought that pleasures were processes because they were simply a case of bodily lacks being replenished, his account was incorrect.

One might well query the basis for Aristotle’s confidence in this matter. In particular, one might wonder why he should be so confident about the categorial basis underlying his contrast between pleasures and processes. It may be tempting, at this juncture, to advert to our earlier distinction between the subjective and source senses of pleasure. Source pleasures, like horseback riding, are, or at least can be, processes. Riding from Laramie to Cheyenne, at any rate, is very clearly a process in Aristotle’s terms: it is a case of locomotion, or motion with respect to place. So, we might conclude directly that while the ride can transpire quickly or slowly, the subjective pleasure involved is a state rather than a process. Being pleased quickly or slowly would be like the horse’s being brown quickly or being spotted slowly; this is simply nonsensical.

¹² Contrary, then, to Gosling and Taylor (1982), p. 205, who say that this is “obviously a point about what it is or is not absurd to say.” They repeat the same suggestion after considering the arguments to the effect that if pleasures were replenishments of lacks in the body, then the body would be the subject of the pleasures, which, according to Aristotle, it is not: “the arguments in 1174a13–b14 seem to be trying to point out that ways of speaking that are appropriate to various forms of motion are quite inappropriate when applied to enjoying” (p. 205).

If that so much as captures Aristotle's complaint, however, then he is mainly quibbling about words. In this were the extent of his criticism, then he would merely have accused Plato of confusing the source sense and the subjective sense of pleasure, and having thereby confused a state with a process. The proper response from Plato would then be: "I meant pleasure in its source sense." Failing that, if there were clear evidence that Plato had not appreciated the rudimentary distinction between the source and subjective senses of pleasure, then he could fairly be faulted for having failed to mark that distinction – but no more. Once aware of the distinction he can say, again, "I mean pleasure in the source sense." No real damage would have been done to his theory by this admission, and nothing Aristotle had said about pleasures and processes would have cut very deep. One wonders, accordingly, whether there is a deeper point at issue, some non-trivial matter driving Aristotle's criticism.

A fuller and more instructive account of Aristotle's dissatisfaction with Plato's account of pleasure, and consequently of his own positive view of pleasure, emerges in the following chapter, *Nicomachean Ethics* x.4. In this chapter, Aristotle pursues the matter of pleasures and processes at greater length and in greater depth. He begins by signaling, as he often does when turning to his own positive view after surveying the *endoxa*,¹³ that he means to take up the matter afresh:

What pleasure is, or what kind of thing it is, will become clearer by taking up the topic again from the beginning. Seeing seems to be complete (*teleia*) at any time, since it needs nothing which comes to be at a later time to complete its form (*teleiôsei autês to eidos*). Pleasure too seems to be this kind of thing, since it is a sort of a whole (*holon*), and one will never encounter a pleasure whose form will have been made complete (*teleiôthêsetai*) by its coming to be for a longer time. It follows, then, that pleasure is not a process (*kinêsis*). For every process (*kinêsis*), for instance building, takes time, and has some end, and is complete (*teleia*) whenever it produces that at which it aims – it is complete in this moment, or, that is, in the entire time. Moreover, all processes are incomplete (*ateleis*) when the processes of their parts are taking time, and these differ in form (*heterai tô(i) eidei*) from the whole process and from one another ... [The constituent parts of a process and the whole process] differ in form, and one will never encounter a process complete in form at just any time [of its occurring], but rather, if at all, in the whole of the time it takes ... The form of pleasure, by contrast, is complete at just any time. Clearly, then, pleasures differ from processes, and are something complete and whole. This also seems true because a process must take time, while being pleased need not; for a whole is present in an instant. From these considerations it is also clear that it is not right to say as some do

¹³ See the beginning of *Met.* vii.17 for an especially clear instance of this tendency.

that pleasure is either a process or a coming-to-be (*genesis*). For these things are not said of everything, but rather of those things which are divisible and are not wholes. For there is no coming-to-be of seeing, or of a point, or of a unit, and none of these is either a process or a coming-to-be. Nor is pleasure a process or a coming-to-be, since it is a whole. (*E.N.* 1174a13–b13, with omissions)

Aristotle is again in this passage interested primarily in showing that pleasure is no kind of process. Now, however, we have greater detail regarding the features had by processes but lacked by pleasures. The grounds for the categorial mismatch he sees between pleasures and processes thus become clearer.

Aristotle offers a whole battery of arguments for this conclusion:

- Pleasure is a whole (*holon*); a process is not; hence, pleasure is not a process.
- A pleasure is complete (*teleia*) in itself; a process is not; hence, pleasure is not a process.
- Perhaps as a corollary of that last argument: processes must be made complete by ends external to themselves; pleasures do not need to be made complete; hence, pleasures are not processes.
- As end-directed developments, processes comprise sub-routines and sub-processes, whereas pleasures do not.
- Pleasures are rather complete at the first moment of their expression; processes are not; hence, no pleasure is a process.
- Finally, processes admit of generation, because they are divisible and not wholes, whereas a pleasure is whole and complete at every instant of its existence; hence no pleasure is a process.

All of these arguments in their different ways appeal to features which pleasure have, and must have, as pleasures. These features ground the categorial distinction he sees between pleasures and processes.

Throughout his effort to differentiate pleasures from processes, Aristotle relies upon a framework for characterizing processes that he understandably leaves unarticulated. He says repeatedly that pleasure lacks the *form* of a process, signaling that he thinks that there is an essential difference between processes and pleasures. Importantly, in this connection, he understands every process to involve a terminus *a quo* and a terminus *ad quem*. In fact, he contends that we can appeal to form twice over when we think of such paradigmatic processes as instances of locomotion. First, he says, different modes of transportation (e.g., flying, walking, and cycling) differ in form, but then again, even more generically, “the place whence and wither make the form of a process” (*E.N.* 1174b5).

Aristotle's appeal to the form of a process makes a crucial point about his distinction between pleasures and processes. His root concern is really that the framework of a process is wrong for a treatment of pleasure. The form of a process requires there to be a starting point from which a process gets underway, a directionality for the process to take, and an end point whose attainment marks its completion. Without attaining its end point, a process is permanently incomplete. Pleasures, avers Aristotle, are not like that. They are rather more like perceptions: they are the sorts of episodes that reach their arrivals upon their departures. They are always complete at every moment.

Or rather, more exactly, they have no arrivals or departures. Pleasures are not processes because every process, or every change (*kinêsis*), involves some manner of displacement. In the *Physics* Aristotle introduces his framework of change as follows:

The forms (*eidê*) and affections (*pathê*) and the place – that into which things being moved are moved – are immovable (*akivnêta*), as for instance, knowledge (*epistêmê*) and heat (*thermotês*). Yet someone might raise an objection: if affections (*pathê*) are motions (*kinêseis*), and whiteness (*leukotês*) is an affection, there will be a change (*metabolê*) to a motion (*kinêsis*). (*Phys.* 224b11–15)

Aristotle responds to this objection as follows: “Rather, it is not the whiteness (*leukotês*) which is the change, but the whitening (*leukansis*)” (*Phys.* 224b15–16). For every change, we are to think of two termini that, relative to an instance of alteration, are immovable. We cannot, however, think of the end points of change as themselves altering, since the altering is proceeding along a categorially circumscribed continuum, from one terminus to another – the whitening does not suffer alteration along any continuum, but rather *is* the alteration along the continuum.

Applying this now to pleasure, Aristotle's contention is that there are no immovable fixed points specifying a process a *pleasuring*. (Note here that we are now using the word intransitively: as one can whiten one's teeth, so one can pleasure one's mate; but in speaking of “whitening” and “pleasuring” Aristotle needs to mean, rather, the processes of becoming white or of being pleased.) Rather, pleasure is the fixed point, or the fixed activity towards which a process alteration may move us. When? Well, says Aristotle, this occurs when and only when we are exercising a life faculty ranging over a fine object superbly well.

We will turn to this last contention in a moment, but for now we should note that these observations show that Aristotle has more in mind when criticizing replenishment theories of pleasure than the mere

thought that pleasures in the subjective sense are not to be confused with pleasures in the source sense. He means, in addition, something much stronger: pleasures must be positively contrasted with any form of change involving a movement along a continuum, as heating moves along a continuum of temperature from hot to cold or becoming white moves along a continuum determined by the color spectrum. He is suggesting that just as it would be wrong to say that heating – as opposed to what is heated – itself becomes hot, so it is wrong to say that pleasure or being pleased is itself an instance of becoming pleased, or is indeed any kind of motion. This is what he means when he concludes that “pleasure is not a process or a coming-to-be, since it is a whole” (*E.N.* 1174b12–13).

IV PLEASURES AS ACTIVITIES, PLEASURES AS PERFECTING ACTIVITIES

If pleasure is not a case of coming-to-be, then what sort of thing is it? In *Nicomachean Ethics* VII, Aristotle treats pleasures as actualities or activities (*energeiai*), where this is expressly contrasted with their being processes. This is the “strange and unexpected” view which occasions Bostock’s incredulous question: “Can Aristotle *really* have believed that what we enjoy is always an activity and never a process?”¹⁴ The answer, I suggest, is that he does not: if pleasure is a process it does not follow that what is enjoyed is a process. Pleasure *is* enjoyment, not the object of enjoyment. Once this is appreciated, it is also possible to appreciate that Aristotle’s contention in *Nicomachean Ethics* X to the effect that pleasure completes or perfects an activity (*energeia*) is not in competition with his account in *Nicomachean Ethics* VII, where it is held that pleasure is an activity. Rather, the two views are complementary.

In *Nicomachean Ethics* VII, Aristotle says that pleasure is “an unimpeded activity of a natural state” (*E.N.* 1153a14–15).¹⁴ In speaking of a pleasure as an *activity* (*energeia*) Aristotle is self-consciously distinguishing it from instances of coming-to-be (*genesis*), and indeed even from a perception of what comes to be. He says, more fully:

Pleasures are not comings-to-be (*genesis*); nor do they all accompany comings-to-be. Rather, they are activities (*energeiai*) and [in each case] an end (*telos*). Nor do they occur when we are coming to be something but when we are using [our faculties]. Moreover, not all pleasures have something else as an end, but only when something is being lead to a perfecting (*teleôsis*) of its nature. It is, accordingly,

¹⁴ Bostock (2000), p. 160.

not right to say that pleasure is a perceptible coming-to-be, but rather one should say that it is the activity of a natural state, and rather than *perceptible* one should say *unimpeded*. (E.N. 1153a9–15)

He is here contrasting pleasures with cases of coming-to-be (*genesis*), just as we might expect, given his rejection of Plato's account of pleasures as cases of replenishment – which certainly seem to be instances of coming-to-be.

Even if we are content to grant that much, however, it is a further and more difficult matter to allow that pleasures are not even cases of *perceived* replenishments. For one might once again advert to the distinction between source and subjective senses of pleasure in order to contend that pleasures – now in the subjective sense – might be instances of perception, which instances of perception might well be perceptions of various cases of coming-to-be. Thus, one might take on board Aristotle's rejection of Plato's approach to pleasure simply by suggesting that pleasures, if not replenishments, because not instances of generation, might nonetheless be perceptions of such processes. One might well, for instance, suppose that if it is not the process of sating my hunger (sc. the filling of my belly) that qualifies as pleasure, it is nonetheless my awareness of this process that qualifies as the pleasure.

Aristotle disagrees, and it is here that his account of pleasure becomes more technical and idiosyncratic. As he contends later, in the tenth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, in a passage often taken to be incompatible with the passage just quoted from the seventh book, pleasure is more than a process. In the latter passage he says not that pleasure *is* an activity but rather that it *perfects* an activity: "Pleasure perfects the activity (*energeia*), not in the way a state (*hexis*) does, by being in the activity, but as a kind of end (*telos*) following upon another, just as being in the prime of life follows upon being at the pinnacle of life" (*teleioi de tēn energeian hē hēdonē ouk hōs hē hexis enuparchousa, all' hōs epiginomenon ti telos, all' hos epiginomenon ti telos, hoion tois akmaiois hē hora*; E.N. 1174b31–33; cf. 1175b32–35). This account, replete as it is with technical Aristotelian terminology, is bound to bewilder – and thereafter to seem incompatible with earlier statements to the effect that it *is* an activity (*energeia*), and not merely something that perfects an activity.

As suggested, it behooves us to set aside the question of consistency as posterior to the question determining precisely what Aristotle here contends. For, at any rate, we could not motivate anything more than a verbal contradiction before unpacking Aristotle's meaning – and even then the verbal contradiction would rely upon the unargued assumption that nothing can both be and complete an activity.

In order to understand Aristotle's contention, we need appreciate what each of its technical terms means. In particular, we must know what he means by saying that pleasure *perfects an activity* (*teleioi de tèn energeian*), not as *an indwelling state* (*hê hexis enuparchousa*), but rather as a sort of *supervenient end* (*epiginomenon ti telos*). We may consider these locutions individually in reverse order in order to see how they fit together corporately.

One may focus this discussion by considering the suggestion that Aristotle's various characterizations of pleasure here in fact cannot fit together, that to speak of an end as supervening already makes it posterior to its supervenient base. Yet if pleasure perfects or completes (*teleioi*) some activity, then it must be somehow prior. Thus, if a carpenter completes a table he is building, then both he and his activity are prior to the existence of the table. Similarly, then, if pleasure completes an activity, it seems prior to the activity it completes. Taking all that together, if pleasure supervenes on some activity (*energeia*), then it is posterior to that activity; if it completes that activity, then it is prior to it. So, one may surmise, we need not look to see if the seventh and the tenth books of the *Nicomachean Ethics* are consistent: Aristotle already contradicts himself in the space of one line in the tenth book. He implies that pleasures are both prior and posterior to activities.

To understand Aristotle's actual meaning in this brief passage is also to understand that this conclusion does not threaten. Some difficulty presents itself, however, because almost all of the language of this passage is exceptional for Aristotle.

First, then, pleasure is a supervenient end (*epiginomenon ti telos*). Aristotle uses this phrase exactly once,¹⁵ although its linguistic basis is reasonably clear: he is thinking of the kind of end that follows upon the activity. If we press for greater precision, we are likely to be frustrated – at least as frustrated as we are when we survey the wide range of uses to which supervenience – the philosophical descendant of the concept here introduced by Aristotle – is put in contemporary philosophy. In this, its inaugural appearance, the word finds only two contextual clues.

The first is its contrast with the second key phrase, "indwelling state" (*hexis enuparchousa*), and the second is the illustration that follows both. As regards the exact phrase *indwelling state*, it is again unparalleled in Aristotle. Still, he is perfectly willing to use the participle "indwelling"

¹⁵ In the almost certainly spurious *Physiognomics* at 806a10, the author does use the call sign *epiginomenon*, where the word seems to mean something like "transitory" rather than "resultant."

(*enuparchousa*) in comparable context just under a dozen times.¹⁶ Several of these parallels involve his mentioning an *indwelling nature* (*enuparchousa phusis*) (e.g., *D.A.* 418b8; *Gen. An.* 741a1), where his point is that a nature (*phusis*) is something intrinsic to the being, and so the source of its motion and development. This seems a useful comparison, then, since a nature is precisely the sort of feature which can be in one way prior and in another way posterior: an immature member of a species has the nature of its kind, but it has yet to realize its nature completely. In this sense, a nature is present in a regulative way, as an end, without also being fully developed in the process leading to it. If this is parallel, then when Aristotle says that pleasure is *not* present in this way, his suggestion is precisely that pleasure is not present in the activities that give rise to pleasure, as somehow regulating their expression. This is, however, what we should expect if pleasure is not the primary activity but rather flows from that activity in a consequential sort of way.

This equally seems to be the point of the second contextual clue, that the supervenience of pleasure may be compared to the way in which the prime of life supervenes on the pinnacle of life (*E.N.* 1174b31–33; cf. *Rhet.* 1390b13–15). Although translators and exegetes have understood this phrase differently,¹⁷ most should agree that Aristotle is here pointing out that one kind of feature can emerge from another feature without additional activity, that the base activity or condition suffices for the supervening activity and condition, even while the supervening activity or condition in no way reduces to the base. Again, if that is so, then pleasure will supervene on certain sorts of activities even while being distinct from them. Since the activities he has in view are episodes of perception and thought, Aristotle will tend to regard pleasures and such activities as intimately related without completely collapsing one into the other. This, presumably, is why he cautions that “nevertheless, pleasure does not seem to be thought or perception of thought (for that would be absurd), but because of their not being separated they seem to be the same to some” (*ou mên eoike ge hê hêdonê dianoia einai oud’ aisthêsis [atopon gar], alla dia to mê chôrizesthai phainetai tisi tauton*; *E.N.* 1175b34–35).

¹⁶ Three come from the possibly spurious *Problems*: 893b1, 906b29, and 948b29. The others are as follows: *DA* 418b8; *Part. An.* 665a17; *Gen. An.* 727b15–16, 741a1, 780a11; *Met.* 996a15, 1013a19, 1014b1, 1015a18.

¹⁷ Different translators have understood Aristotle’s meaning differently. Ross (Aristotle, 1925) renders this phrase “supervenes as the bloom of youth does on those in the flower of their age.” Hadreas (2004), p. 157, objects that parallel passages provide no warrant for this translation. Citing *Rhet.* 1390b13–15, he prefers: “as readiness comes to those in their prime.” This is appropriate for part of the simile, but for only one part. Bostock (2000), p. 161, surveys some of the alternatives.

So much, however, only serves to bring our initial problem into sharper relief: if pleasure supervenes on psychic activities, if it emerges from them without being reducible to them, then it is hard to see how it can also manage to complete or perfect them. This worry brings us back around to our first crucial phrase: that pleasure perfects an activity (*teleioi de tēn energeian*). Once again we have a similar sort of problem of interpretation, because we have very few exact linguistic parallels in Aristotle for this verb; the verb in question (*teleioo*) is almost always used by Aristotle in the middle or passive voice, where something may be said to be completed or perfected without specifying the agent of perfection or completion.¹⁸ Thus, as a typical example, Aristotle uses the passive form in logic to speak of a syllogism as being perfected by being reduced to a figure in the first form (e.g., *An. Pr.* 29a16, 30).

When the active voice is used, as it sometimes is, though only rarely, in Aristotle's biological works, the agent tends to be something entirely clear and external. For instance, in the *Generation of Animals*, Aristotle speaks of a mother bird as being unable to perfect or complete her young internally, and thus as provisioning her externally developing eggs with the nutrition necessary for growth until birth (*Gen. An.* 735b20–22; cf. 773b25). This sort of case seems of limited value for our current question, because the external cause is an *efficient* cause (in this case an insufficient one), where the priority relation is clear and unproblematic. The mother bird cannot bring the embryo to its full gestation internally. She is herself, of course, nothing supervenient, but an unproblematic, antecedently existing cause. By contrast, at issue in our difficult passage is the question of how something supervenient can yet prove to complete or perfect that from which it emerges. We should wish to explain Aristotle's usage. It does not help merely to assert, as Grant does, that: "'Cause' in this Aristotelian usage becomes equivalent to 'result'."¹⁹

The problem is this. It is reasonable to assume that if Ψ supervenes on Φ , then A's being Ψ cannot bring about B's being Φ , at least not in the manner of an independently existing efficient cause. For example, suppose that we think of the mental as supervening on the neurological. We will not, in this instance, be at all inclined to think that mental states bring about neural states in the manner of an efficient cause; if anything, we would be tempted in the opposite direction. Even so, Aristotle's contrast between something's being an indwelling state and its being a

¹⁸ Hadreas (2004) provides a very useful chart of uses of this verb in Aristotle. He contends that it does not occur in the active present tense prior to *EN* x.4–5.

¹⁹ Grant (1874), II, p. 326n.6.

supervenient end does provide a reasonably clear and plausible way of understanding how some A's being Ψ can bring about B's being Φ , even when Ψ supervenes on Φ – without, however, assigning independent efficient causality to A's being Ψ .

To see how, we must first appreciate that Aristotle is not thinking of pleasure as a mere by-product of an activity, whether wanted or not, nor indeed whether anticipated or not, nor again whether nomologically correlated or not. Aristotle's language is very much the language of causality, including, it seems, efficient causality.²⁰ In this direction, Aristotle seems to be thinking of pleasure as more intimately related to the activity it completes than the mere epiphenomenal by-product picture portrays. Although a supervenient end, pleasure makes an activity the activity it is; it is inherent in its execution rather than an excrescence of it. How that should be so, however, Aristotle does not make immediately clear.

Indeed, the traditional fault lines of interpretation for this passage have divided up not around the question of whether the sort of completion in question is broadly causal or not, but rather around which sort of causation is in play, formal or final. Some, stressing the presence of the world *telos* in Aristotle's formulation, have opted for the view that Aristotle regards pleasure as a sort of final cause,²¹ a view seemingly reinforced by the analogue to health in the lines that follow.²² Others have preferred the formal cause, partly on the thought that god finds his activity pleasant, but has no final cause beyond himself.²³

There is, however, no reason to treat these alternatives as mutually exclusive; there is, on the contrary, some reason to treat them as co-extensive in this context. As the language of perfection or completion suggests, Aristotle seems to be thinking of pleasure efficiently as well as formally. That is not in itself a problem, since final, formal, and efficient causes may be, according to Aristotle, co-extensive (*Phys.* 198a24–26; cf. *Meta.*

²⁰ Unfortunately, of the fifty-nine uses of this verb in Aristotle, only a very few are active and transitive instances and these predominantly occur in *EN* x.

²¹ So Gauthier and Jolif (1970), II, p. 839.

²² So again Gauthier and Jolif (1970), although this would seem to be a mistake: Aristotle does not make health analogous to pleasure at 1174b25–26, but is rather suggesting that pleasure does not perfect the activity in the way that the fully operational sense faculty or fine object do, and then illustrating that causes may be of various sorts by adverting to a standard example that an efficient and formal cause do not bring about health in the same matter. For this reason, Burnet is wrong to think that we must bracket *omoiôs aitia esti tou hugiainein* at 1174b26, which he says “confuses the argument” (Burnet [1900], p. 453n. § 70).

²³ Aquinas and more recently Gosling and Taylor (1982), pp. 248–49. They actually conclude, appealing to an attenuated notion of final cause that, “It follows, of course, that with humans it will commonly be the final cause of action. But it is the final cause because it is the form.”

1044a35–b1); so, there need not be a competition here at all. Pleasure may be a goal of human action, and thus a final cause; but it is not a defining feature of an action. Pleasure is not, for example, the defining goal of perception or thinking. Even so, pleasure, when present, makes these activities what they are, and is thus an efficient cause of them – and is for this same reason a formal cause.

More exactly, pleasure is a final cause alongside the final causes of perception and thought, as co-extensive with them. That, at any rate, seems to be the purport of the reasonable observation Aristotle makes:

We might think that everyone desires pleasure, since everyone aims at being alive. Living is a kind of activity, and each [animal] is active with respect to those things and in those ways which he loves most of all – so the musician in hearing with respect to melodies and the lover of learning in thought with respect to the objects of contemplation, and so on in each of the other cases. Pleasure perfects these activities and so also completes life, which people desire. Accordingly, they reasonably also aim at pleasure, since it perfects life for each of them, and life is choiceworthy. (*E.N.* 1175a12–17)

Aristotle then asks a surprising question:

Do we choose life because of pleasure or pleasure because of life? Let this be put aside for the present. For these are evidently yoked together, and admit of no separation: pleasure does not arise without activity, while pleasure perfects every activity. (*E.N.* 1175a17–21)

The question is surprising, since Aristotle clearly maintains that we choose pleasure because of life and not the other way around. Still, the question does make sense in its context, since in this passage Aristotle is highlighting a consequence of his theory of pleasure, namely that pleasure is necessarily co-extensive with intellectual or perceptual activity of the highest form. It is precisely because, and only because, perfected activity and pleasure are necessarily co-extensive that this question becomes salient. Thus, when the indwelling final cause is fully active in the right circumstances, ranging over the finest objects, then pleasure accrues, without fail; but this pleasure is not the activity of perception or thought but flows from it even while it completes it.

The picture Aristotle seems to have in view, then, is something akin to what occurs when a well-trained harmonic choir sings in a suitably reverberative space, say a church with a capacious dome: the choir, in the right acoustic space, sings so as to produce harmonic overtones. That is, the harmonic choir aims to produce such harmonic overtones, as a final cause, and, if successful, such tones emanate from the normal sound

structure they produce. The harmonic overtones complete the sound space – they are part of the entire sound produced, but also arise out of the non-overtone structure as epiphenomena. Such overtones flow from the structure and inform it. One may ask: does the choir seek the complete structure for the sake of the overtones or the overtones for the sake of the complete structure. Both, in a sense, but if one must be denominated, it is the completed sound activity which is already worthy of choice.

If this is correct, the sense in which pleasure is an efficient cause does not require it to be an antecedently given entity, existing *prior* to the activity whose final cause it is. Rather, the sense of “completes” or “perfects” in “perfects the activity” is closer to the “makes” in “clothes make the man” than in “a tailor makes clothes.” Similarly, we may say that “an explosion of sunlit color completes the rose garden” or that “a rich, savory scent perfects the dish.” None of these is an indwelling state, each supervenes, presumably as a non-dominant or defining end, and each brings about the completed whole: the man, the garden, the dish. The result is then that a feature that emerges without being an indwelling state nonetheless contributes to determining the identity of the totality. In the case of pleasure, the totality is an activity, an activity of perception or thought; and nothing precludes pleasure itself being an activity, as opposed to a process. Pleasure, argues Aristotle, is a perfecting activity.

V CONCLUSIONS

Aristotle’s account of pleasure has occasioned unusually strident responses from his detractors: they find his view incredible, incomprehensible, circular. He babbles.

By reflecting on the metaphysics of pleasure in *Nicomachean Ethics* x, we can appreciate that whatever its ultimate merits, Aristotle’s view is neither incomprehensible nor incredible. He thinks that pleasures arise in the activities of perception and thought, when our faculties are functioning at their highest level and arrayed over their finest objects. He thinks, further, that pleasures in turn perfect or complete those same activities: pleasure contributes to such perceptions and thoughts by making them what they are, namely the highest forms of human cognition. A consummate thought or perception, thinks Aristotle, is a pleasurable thought or instance of perception. This seems not only comprehensible, but credible and even defensible: we are not subjects who experience pleasures independently of our thinking or perceiving. We are rather subjects

who experience pleasure *in* our thinking and our perceiving – precisely when our faculties are functioning at their finest.

Using this understanding of the metaphysics of pleasure in *Nicomachean Ethics* x, we may see a way forward when addressing the traditional objections of circularity. Mill, as we saw, thought Aristotle's account of pleasure explanatorily vacuous, because of its simply making the phenomenon its own theory by holding perceptions and thoughts to be sources of pleasure when and only when they give rise to pleasure. This is not, however, Aristotle's view: perceptions and thoughts do not give rise to pleasure as sources to some ethereal subject languishing behind acts of perception and thought. Rather, perceptions and thoughts *are* pleasures; they are pleasures when our faculties are functioning well and ranging over fine objects. It is only because Mill is looking for a phenomenal residue of pleasure external to the activities of perception and thought that he finds Aristotle's view a non-starter. Yet Mill's framework is implicitly denied by Aristotle when he insists both that pleasure is a supervenient end *and* something capable of perfecting the activity whose end it is: it is neither a by-product nor an efficient cause existing prior to the activity it perfects. There is no threat of circularity in explanation because there is no *explanandum* of the sort Mill introduces.

This same metaphysics of pleasure opens a similar direction of development for the long-standing question of the internal consistency of Aristotle's several approaches to pleasure within the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In the final book, we are told that pleasure has a specific character: it perfects or completes certain psychological activities. Plainly, it may do so even though it is itself an activity (*energeia*), in the sense in which an activity is opposed to a process (*kinêsis*). At a minimum, it now becomes incumbent upon those determined to show some inconsistency in Aristotle's accounts to establish that nothing can both *be* and *complete* an activity (*energeia*). We have seen reason to accept both theses at once. Pleasure does not happen quickly or slowly, and it does not require sub-routines for its completion. Rather, like the activities it perfects, pleasure is whole at every moment of its being.

Lastly, then, to Anscombe's babbling: it should now be clear that this charge is as unfortunate as it is unwarranted.

CHAPTER 9

Inappropriate passion

Stephen Leighton

In his *Metaphysics* Aristotle repudiates the poets' claim that envy (*phthonos*) is natural to the divine nature, citing the adage that bards tell many lies (i.2, 982b32–983a4). The repudiation is noteworthy: Aristotle does not normally deny passions to gods or quarrel with poets. Presumably, it is indebted to his view that envy is named in a way that involves badness, is a wicked passion, and something that is felt by those who are bad (*N.E.* 11.6, 11078a8–13; *E.E.* 11.3, 1221b18–23; *Rh.* 11.11, 1388a34–36). Even so, his repudiation provokes several questions. What is Aristotle's understanding of envy and its wicked nature? How does this sort of badness compare to and contrast with inappropriate realizations of passions such as anger and fear? How do passions relate to the character of those who feel them? Does (and, if so, how does) Aristotle's understanding of passions' inappropriateness in ethical matters fit with his understanding of their value elsewhere?

The essay to follow investigates these questions, beginning with Aristotle's most pervasive thoughts on passions' inappropriateness, and their connections to character (section 1). The baseness of wicked passions is then explored (section 2), followed by an examination of envy (section 3) and its baseness (section 4). That and how envy suits Aristotle's doctrine of the mean is considered (section 5), as is the inappropriateness and appropriateness of passions in diverse domains (section 6).

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I INAPPROPRIATE PASSION IN THE
NICOMACHEAN ETHICS

For most passions, inappropriateness arises in three related ways. Passion can be (i) inappropriate to the situation, (ii) appropriate to the situation but realized in inappropriate ways, or (iii) inappropriate by failing to arise when and where it should. Anger, fear, joy, hatred, and many other passions can be inappropriate in these ways. They can also be felt in appropriate ways.

Aristotle often casts these forms of inappropriateness in terms of excess and deficiency, too much and too little, with the intermediate being what is appropriate (e.g., *N.E.* 11.6, 1106a26–32, b16–20, b36–1107a6; 11.9, 1109a20–24). Sometimes he expresses things differently: inappropriateness is still juxtaposed with what is intermediate or mean, but contrasts “having these feelings at the right times, about the right things, toward the right people, for the right end, and in the right way,” where this is “the intermediate and best condition, and this is proper to virtue” (11.6, 1106b21–24; cf. 1107a15–16 and 11.9, 1109a25–30, b14–18).

These two ways of speaking (what we can call his descriptive versus triadic glosses) can be compatible. What is excessive or deficient, for example, can be a matter of not being affected in the way one should. So, too, not being affected in the way one should can be a matter of excess or deficiency. Still, these ways of speaking need not align. Aristotle’s language of excess, deficiency, and intermediate portrays matters in triadic terms concerning what is continuous and divisible, where excess, deficiency, and the mean are deemed important markers of value. His descriptive gloss does not and need not suggest the same: a triadic structure is not implied, neither is the more or less, too much or too little, nor intervening gradations of these, nor even that matters be continuous and divisible. Further, the descriptive gloss can apply more broadly, and can address cases in which the triadic articulation appears forced. Consider, for example, the following depictions of anger: annoyed, bristling, cranky, cross, enraged, exasperated, fuming, furious, incensed, infuriated, irritated, livid, mad, petulant, provoked, riled, steamed, testy, ticked off, worked up. These and other meaningful characterizations are poorly illuminated by, compared to, and contrasted with one another in (or simply in) triadic terms, in varying amounts, degrees, or intensities of anger. Often, they are more revealingly captured in descriptive terms, by fuller depictions of anger, its circumstances, causes, the ways in which it manifests itself, towards whom, etc. For example, speaking of provoked

or infuriated gestures at anger's cause rather than its quantity; speaking of one as fuming or steamed gestures at the person's state, and so forth.

One might conjecture that Aristotle's descriptive articulation is the more adept, while the triadic articulation is more limited. The conjecture is premature, and in any case beyond present purposes – which is to underscore that Aristotle gives us two ways of thinking about the inappropriateness and appropriateness of passions, each relevant to an understanding of the mean, and applicable to passions such as fear, anger, hate, and love.¹ An appreciation of the inappropriateness and appropriateness of passions, as well as the doctrine of the mean, needs to address both articulations.

Inappropriate and appropriate passion can come to be reflected in persons' character. Those of good character feel passions appropriately. For example, those who embody the virtue of mildness feel anger, do so in situations that warrant it, and feel it in appropriate ways. Those of bad character do not achieve this. An irascible person, for example, does not contain his or her anger, but is quick to anger, feeling it even where it is unsuited to the situation (IV.5, 1126a13–17; cf. i). An inirascible person tends not to anger, even when appropriate (IV.5, 1126a2–9; cf. iii). Different again is the kind who feels anger when the passion is appropriate to the situation, but does so inappropriately – as, for example, does one who feels anger more than is right (IV.5, 1126a8–13; cf. ii).

Persons of failed character in one of the above ways may or may not display similar failings elsewhere (cf. III.6, 1115a20–22). The inirascible noted above (iii), for example, may or may not feel fear, pity, hatred, or other passions in a parallel way, i.e., not at all or too rarely. So, too, an irascible person (i) may or may not contain their fear, pity, or other passions, may or may not feel them though unsuited to the situation. Again, those moved to anger where apt to the situation but felt inaptly may or may not respond similarly in fear, pity, etc. (ii). The possible concatenations of passions felt, their manner of manifestation, and pertinent character types are considerable.

¹ How Aristotle understands the relationship between these articulations is unclear. The triadic articulation dominates his thinking: Aristotle may suppose that it underpins the descriptive articulation. In places, however, the notions of excess and deficiency are themselves glossed in descriptive terms (cf. *N.E.* IV.5, 1126a5–12 and II.9, 1109a24–30). There are ongoing disputes regarding how helpful any version of the doctrine of the mean is: Barnes (1976) and Hursthouse (2006), for example, appear to find the view largely unhelpful, while Urmson (1988) and Welton and Polansky (1995) have mounted substantial defenses of it, including its triadic articulation. Lawrence (2009) offers a sympathetic attempt to understand the doctrine in a way that tries to avoid many of its perceived difficulties.

Further complexities of passion and character arise because Aristotle takes superhuman virtue, brutishness, continence, and incontinence (not simply virtue and vice) to be ethically relevant character types (VII.1, 1145a15–18). He under-describes these additional character states and the roles that passions take in them, but some differences seem apparent. For example, an inner turmoil will be present in one whose “irascibility” is expressed through a kind of incontinence that need not be present in one whose “irascibility” is expressed through vice (cf. IV.5, 1126a13–18 and VII.1, 1145b9–15).

Yet further complexities ensue as one departs from paradigmatic cases. For example, the place of passion, its inappropriate and appropriate expressions, in one whose “bravery” arises through spirit is different from the paradigmatically courageous (III.8, 1116b23–30). Different again is the fear inappropriate or appropriate when facing bad reputation, poverty, sickness, or friendlessness (III.6, 1115a9–24; III.7, 1116a10–16). Further, passions such as indignation can be appropriate or inappropriate without seeming to be associated with a particular character type or virtue (II.7, 1108a35–b5). So, too, shame’s arousal, while capable of being inappropriate or appropriate, seems not a matter of human excellence (II.7, 1108a30–35; IV.9, 1128b10–34).

These and other complexities in Aristotle’s account need not be pursued further here. We have seen certain ways in which passions like anger and fear can be inappropriate and appropriate, have linked their manifestations to some prominent character types, and have drawn attention to some of the complexities in passions’ expressions and their ties to character.

The foregoing forms of inappropriate and appropriate passion have to do with the fact, absence, and manner of manifestation of passions in their circumstances (i–iii). Aristotle deploys this analysis regarding diverse passions, frequently relating it to specific states of character and his doctrine of the mean. An unvarnished statement of its central claim arises when he differentiates passions from states and capacities. Aristotle identifies several passions, and observes that in general they are things accompanied by pleasure and pain (II.5, 1105b21–23). Shortly thereafter, he comments:

For we are called excellent or base insofar as we have virtues or vices, not insofar as we have feelings [passions, *pathē*]. Further, we are neither praised nor blamed insofar as we have feelings; for we do not praise the angry or the frightened person, and do not blame the person who is simply angry, but only the person who is angry in a particular way. (II.5, 1105b28–1106a2, based on a translation by Irwin)

In part, Aristotle is asserting that praise and blame attach to the person for the way in which passions such as anger or fear are felt. Thus, it is inappropriate to condemn fear or anger as such, or us because we feel them. Further, while blame or praise attaches to us for particular ways in which fear or anger arises (is felt), this is not to deny that in certain situations *any* manifestation of fear or anger can be blameworthy. As noted earlier, one failure of the irascible is that he or she feels angry despite the fact that it is not suited to the particular situation (i).²

The scope of these reflections proves more limited than the above passage alone suggests. Aristotle has claimed that fear and anger are to be analyzed in the above fashion. He has counted appetite, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, love, hate, longing, jealousy, and pity as passions (*N.E.* 11.5, 1105b21–23). While most of these are to be understood in the above way, at least one is not.

Now not every action or feeling admits of the mean. For the names of some automatically include baseness – for instance, spite, shamelessness, envy, [among feelings], and adultery theft, murder, among actions. For all of these and similar things are called by these names because they themselves, not their excesses or deficiencies, are base. Hence in doing these things we can never be correct, but must invariably be in error. (11.6, 1107a8–15; cf. *E.E.* 11.3, 1221b18–26)

The inappropriateness of some passions is not a failure to feel the passion (iii) or a problem with its manifestation in its situation (ii) or its inappropriateness to the *particular* situation (i). Rather, to feel these passions is simply inappropriate, invariably in error (iv). These passions are not appropriate to situations, howsoever they manifest themselves; they are inapt, negative emotions, what the *Eudemian Ethics* characterizes as wicked (*mochthêria*; 11.3, 1221b21). Putting this in terms of mean: they themselves are base, not their excesses or deficiencies. There can be no mean of them; one cannot be affected by them as one should, at the right time, about the right thing, toward the right people, for the right end, and in the right way.

Wicked passions can play no part in a virtuous character, but are felt by those who are bad. They cannot contribute to, but only inhibit, a virtuous or flourishing life. While most passions deserve praise and blame in terms of their manifestation in particular circumstances (i–iii), these deserve blame simply for being felt (iv).

² One may be tempted to think of Aristotle's view as a "manner thesis." This will mislead if taken to sharply distinguish *that* a passion has arisen from *how* it arises – as though there could be the fact of passion arising without it arising in some manner. It is not Aristotle's view that every or any passion is appropriate to any situation (its fact), with only its *manner* needing to be of the right sort. In most situations, any manifestation of various passions will prove inappropriate.

2 THE BASENESS OF WICKED PASSIONS

The suggestion that some passions are wicked, simply inappropriate, is appealing. So too is the suggestion that spite, envy, and shamelessness are examples. Whether these suggestions can be justified deserves consideration, as does whether (and how) Aristotle's endorsement of wicked passions affects his understanding of the mean, and passions' appropriateness and inappropriateness (i–iii).

Aristotle's reflections on what is commonly translated "adultery" (*moicheia*) can help to reveal his approach.³ One can name something in a neutral way; as well, one can name it in a way that imputes baseness to it. When one speaks in the former way, one allows that some manifestations can be appropriate and others inappropriate. When one speaks in the latter way, its manifestations are deemed base, and thereby inappropriate.

According to Aristotle, naming something "*moicheia*" speaks of sexual activity in a way that imputes baseness to it. One can speak of these matters without this imputation, as we do (in English) by speaking of sexual activity, copulation, intercourse, intimacy, having sex, etc. Speaking in the latter ways allows that the activity can be inappropriate or appropriate (cf. i–iii), and articulated in terms of the mean.

By contrast, speaking of "adultery" speaks to (names) a form of inappropriate sexual activity (iv), one that concerns the person with whom sex is had (*E.E.* 11.3, 1221b17–27). It is not something that can be done well, only badly; it is not something in terms of which one can attain the mean. Speaking of adultery, then, is to speak to a form of sexual activity that is wrong, inapt, base, wicked, a matter of acting badly.⁴ Aristotle goes on to link it to at least two vices: adultery for profit is a form of injustice; adultery for pleasure is a form of profligacy (*N.E.* v.2, 1130a24–28). Since the concern is not for appropriate times, occasions, manners ... in which to be adulterous, what becomes crucial is whether, in fact, the sexual activity counts as adulterous. Thus, Aristotle observes that some will contest the designation, maintaining, for example, that because the intercourse was compelled or done in ignorance, it was not adulterous (*E.E.* 11.3, 1221b23–26 cf. *Rh.* 1.13, 1374a1–18). The presumption in arguing so

³ Dover (1974) observes that "to seduce the wife, widowed mother, unmarried daughter, sister or niece of a citizen" counted as *moicheia* (p. 209). So seen, its range is different from our own understanding of adultery. The differences can be ignored for present purposes.

⁴ Aristotle allows that good as well as bad persons commit adultery (*N.E.* v.4, 1132a2–4). He may think the same of wicked passions, although his view that the character of those who feel them is bad suggests otherwise.

is that adultery is wrong, with the argument attempting to discount the contested sexual activity as a matter of adultery.

The foregoing, as well as filling in Aristotle's understanding of wicked actions, can help to show how Aristotle can maintain such wickedness, and relate it to his doctrine of the mean. By noting that actions such as theft, murder, and adultery are simply inappropriate, Aristotle need not disconnect them from the mean or the analysis of the inappropriateness set out earlier (i–iii). Rather, certain activities that are inappropriate as determined by the doctrine of the mean, when collected and considered together, and named in a way that speaks of their baseness, are simply inappropriate. Sexual activity can be appropriate or inappropriate, with at least one configuration of certain of its activities counting as base, simply wrong, a matter of adultery.

Can one give a similar account regarding wicked passions?

To do so would involve accounting for relevant passions as simply inappropriate. This would involve showing that for each wicked passion there is a related passion whose manifestation can be appropriate or inappropriate, can admit of a mean, can be felt at the right time, in the right place, etc. The baseness of wicked passions would need to be explained as particular configurations of inappropriate manifestations of the related passions, identified (named) in a way that speaks to their baseness.

In general, Aristotle appears well positioned to make sense of the baseness of wicked passions. He rightly supposes that our ways of naming can be ethically neutral or address baseness. Where our ways of speaking are relevantly neutral, the earlier analysis applies in a straightforward way (i–iii). Anger, fear, pity, and other passions are plausibly construed in this way. Where our ways of naming and grouping speak to inappropriate expressions, one speaks of something wicked – something that does not admit of the mean (iv). Envy, spite, and shamelessness are plausibly construed in this way.

3 ENVY

That envy, spite, and shamelessness are plausibly construed as wicked does not ensure that Aristotle can account for this. Consider envy, beginning with the *Rhetoric's* more fully drawn characterization.

Aristotle takes envy (*phthonos*) and indignation (*nemesis*) to involve disturbing pains directed at others' well-doing (success, *eupragia*). One thing that differentiates the two is the basis of the agitated pain. Whereas

indignation's pain concerns someone's *unworthy* (*anaxios*) well-doing, envy's pain simply responds to the well-doing of a like and equal (*Rh.* II.9, 1386b19–20). Aristotle characterizes envy as:

a certain kind of distress at apparent well-doing on the part of one's peers in attaining the good things that have been mentioned, not that a person may get anything for himself but because of those who have it. (*Rh.* II.10, 1387b22–25, based on a translation by Kennedy)

From our vantage Aristotle depicts a strikingly resentful and inactive form of envy: it does not aspire to the goods that others have (as does emulation), but largely dwells in pain.⁵ Even so, it can bring pleasure: those who feel envy enjoy the deprivation or destruction of peers' achievements (II.9, 1386b34–1387a3).

Those feeling envy see themselves in light of their peers, taking a peer's possession(s) or success(es) as a reproach to themselves (II.10, 1388a16–19). The peers that Aristotle has in mind include those near one in time, place, age, and reputation. Those of greatest concern are those we rival, i.e., competitors, rivals in love, and in general those who vie for the same things. Accordingly, we are not thought to envy inferiors, those greatly superior, those far off, long dead, or in the distant future (II.10, 1388a9–16). Not being our peers or rivals, they fall outside of envy's concern.

Aristotle's account makes room for envy in response to being outdone, but it does not require it. His example of an older person envying a younger person, doing so in virtue of what he or she once had, speaks to aging, not being outdone (cf. *Rh.* II.10, 1388a19–23). Again, his talk of having or seeming to have persons like oneself, rivals, those wanting the same things, and 'potter against potter' – all allow for envy without requiring being outdone (II.10, 1388a5–16). If so, then on Aristotle's view, discerning that one's peers rival one, are in one's league, and enjoy the kinds of success one is concerned with, can lead to envy, and be reciprocated in turn.

The goods over which envy arises are diverse, often come by chance, and include honor, love, youth, ease in accomplishment, the repute for wisdom and happiness, and generally the things we rival peers for. Honor

⁵ Konstan (2006) argues that Aristotle is refashioning the contrast between *phthonos* and *nemesis* (Chapter 5). This may help to explain why Aristotle offers several depictions of *phthonos*, including the particularly resentful conception we have here. It may also help to explain why there is no uptake of Hippias' observation that those feeling envy suffer doubly – both at others' goods and their own troubles (cf. *Hippias* B16).

and repute (which on Aristotle's view are amongst the pleasantest of things) seem particularly important – especially where a personal desire is involved or the sense that one should have these things (see *Rh.* I.5, 1362a5–6, I.11, 1371a8–9, and II.10, 1387b30–1388a15).

Those who envy are faulted, honor-loving persons. They include those who are honored, especially for wisdom and happiness, as well as those fond of fame, and pretenders to wisdom (II.10, 1387b30–35). All appear to be persons who think well of themselves, and wish for more. Yet, their love of honor seems excessive (cf. *N.E.* II.7, 1107b28–35 and IV.4, 1125b11–20). Further, they seem vulnerable, with their envy able to take a remarkably defensive posture – as can be seen in Aristotle's observation that those greatly accomplished and fortunate who fall but a little short in having everything, nonetheless can feel envy, and think that everyone is trying to take what belongs to them (*Rh.* II.10, 1387b26–29).

While Aristotle does not take envy to prompt persons to seek the goods envied, it need not remain passive. Those who feel envy tend to unjust acts (*E.E.* III.7, 1234a30–31), and attempt to prevent their peers from having the goods in question (*Rh.* II.11, 1388a35–36). Further, it seems plausible that it can augment other features of a personality. Arguably, a greedy person who feels envy can become (through envy) acutely cognizant of the goods that others have, and therein more likely to act upon their greed.

Although the character of those who feel envy is bad (above), Aristotle does not suggest that envy is integral to a specific character type or vice, in the way, for example, that anger is integral to irascibility (above). Nonetheless, it can have specific and interesting roles in those of failed character. For example, the small-souled are inclined to envy because to them everything is great (II.10, 1387b33–35). Indeed, since small-souled persons undervalue their achievements, envy (when present) will have much to be concerned with (cf. *N.E.* IV.3, 1125a20–26). Still, envy is not necessary to being small-souled, or vice versa.

Again, as noted earlier, those who have a high opinion of their own wisdom and wish to be honored for it are inclined to envy. Presumably, these are persons of faulted character, who take their peers to be wise, a good for which they particularly wish to be honored. Their aspiration to be honored in this, their want or sense that they should be honored, leaves them vulnerable to envy. Yet, here too envy is not necessary to an aspiration for these honors, even amongst those of faulted character.

It is worth noting that Aristotle's understanding of envy is not set. For example, two glosses from the *Eudemian Ethics* offer a related

understanding. There envy is said to be pain felt towards those prospering *worthily* (III.7, 1233b18–22; cf. II.3, 1221a38–b2).⁶ Whereas Aristotle's predominant understanding speaks to a base passion consumed by the fact that others fare well, overlooking or disregarding and indifferent to the merit of it, this characterization speaks to a passion attentive to the merit of others' well-doing, and distressed by it.

4 ENVY, A WICKED PASSION

One reason for examining envy was to test Aristotle's view that envy is a wicked passion. In general terms this requires that envy be characterized in ways that impute baseness to it, that it not partake in virtue, or be praiseworthy, or contribute to living and doing well. As portrayed above, envy meets these conditions. Whether it can do so in detail and with justification we should consider.

Envy is sensitive to and concerned for things that matter (peers, what we rival them for, well-doing, honor, repute), but improperly responds to them. In part, envy is wicked because it fails to show concern, much less proper concern, for the *merit* or *worthiness* in peers' well-doing. To attend to peers' well-doing, while failing to be concerned with or moved by the merits in faring so is unjustified and inappropriate – as would be any bald lack of regard, disregard, or dismissal of value. This lack of concern for worthiness is not the setting aside in light of other, worthy concerns, or accidental, but targeted. Those feeling envy turn from, do not regard the merit in their peers' faring, and do so without warrant.⁷ Taking this stance towards what others have achieved cannot be maintained in an appropriate way. Hence, the passion is base, rather than the inapt manifestation of something otherwise and elsewhere appropriate: there is no valuable basis for baldly dismissing the worth in others' well-doing, and no associated excellence.

Envy's pain compounds its baseness. Pain amongst persons inhibits fruitful relationships there (cf. *N.E.* VIII.5, 1157b13–17, 23–25, and VIII.6, 1158a23–25). Inhibited relations amongst peers will inhibit a social

⁶ Again, in the *Topics* Aristotle speaks of being envious of the success of good people (II.2, 110a1).

⁷ Since envy is felt by those of bad character, Aristotle's ethical interest in envy is as part of a patterned response, rather than as a random and particular oversight, or accidental failure to notice. The bad character types relevant can be reasonably diverse, including (in our terms) boorish or narcissistic sorts who do not pick up on such matters, contemptuous sorts who disregard them, and so forth.

animal's prospects for flourishing (cf. *N.E.* 1.7, 1097b6–14). The damage done includes the distress in feeling envy, something that is without warrant, without fruit, without value. Further, being in the presence of or the object of such pointless distress can only be unwelcome, and may prove unendurable, thereby frustrating persons, and their prospects for valuable relations with those feeling envy.

Envy's pain, like its disregard of merit, is not simply the inapt manifestation of something otherwise valuable, but is base. There seems no appropriate place for this pain, no means for it to support human excellence or flourishing. And so too regarding envy's association with pleasures taken in others' misfortune.

Other features of envy reinforce these conclusions. Aristotle appreciates that to be concerned for honor, to comprehend oneself in light of rivals, to be pained by the comparison can be appropriate. But to be pained by others' achievements in envy's bald way is unwarranted and distancing (above) – particularly since there is no suggestion that envy aspires to understanding or self-examination or valuable achievement (*Rh.* 11.10, 1387b22–25).⁸ Again, envy's apparent need to outshine others, particularly in honor and repute, is unjustified. By Aristotle's reckoning, honor is the greatest of external goods, given as prize to those who are good, done so for the finest achievements (*N.E.* 1.3, 1123b16–22, b34–1124a1). Not only is it right to aspire to such honor, but one should love honor more than most do (1.4, 1125b14–17). Still, to be simply honor-loving is wrong, as is pursuing it for further reward (cf. *N.E.* 1.4, 1125b9–11 and 11.8, 1159a12–25). Since envy's impetus is not for achievement or excellence, but more for honor and accolade, it is base.

Furthermore, the way in which peers' achievements are taken as a reproach deepens envy's baseness – as does the conviction that one should have these goods. There is no suggestion that either is founded on a realistic appraisal of what others or the person him or herself (the one feeling envy) merits; neither is said to foster productive motivation. Indeed, envy's failure to motivate or to inspire emulation of like achievement (but, instead, its tendency to dwell in pain, perhaps inclining persons to destroy or deprive peers of the goods envied and to take pleasure

⁸ Emulation, by contrast, involves distress at one's failures in honored matters upon appreciating that one's peers succeed, where one could but has not (cf. *Rh.* 11.11, 1388a30–36). Emulation's concern for failure leads persons to seek goods they are worthy of. Thus, Aristotle takes this emotion to be valuable, and present even amongst those as accomplished as the great-souled (*Rh.* 11.11, 1388b3).

in their misfortune) reveals a meanness contrary to a proper concern for what is good.

Envy is neither justified nor appropriate, but impedes human relationships and flourishing. It supports and embodies no excellence; it offers no route to the human good.

To the extent that we can determine matters, similar conclusions apply to Aristotle's rival understanding of envy. Whereas much of the problematic nature of envy as understood in the *Rhetoric* has to do with its targeted dismissal of merit, the rival understanding replaces this with disdain for others' merited accomplishments. In being pained by others' merited accomplishments, the valuing of others and their achievements is opposite to what it should be. The bonds between humans are assaulted – again, without warrant. Once more, we do not have something that can be done well, but a cruel dismissal of others and their achievements, one that reveals a deeply pernicious character.

Aristotle can make good his claim that envy is a wicked passion. It is appropriate that he repudiates the claim that the gods feel envy.

5 ENVY AND THE MEAN

We have seen that wicked passions do not challenge Aristotle's doctrine of the mean, and that and why Aristotle deems envy wicked. We have now to consider how and how well Aristotle's account of envy and its wicked nature fits with his understanding of the mean.

Earlier, I indicated that Aristotle speaks of the mean in both triadic and descriptive terms. The latter would make sense of envy's base nature by indicating and explaining that and why there is no amount, no time, no place, no occasion, no end, no manner in which one should fester in pain upon peers' well-doing, consumed by an apparent need to outshine them. It would show that and why there is no time or place simply to enjoy the destruction of peers' achievements (or to disdain their worthy achievement).

In effect, the argument in the preceding section addresses envy's baseness in descriptive terms. It has not emphasized times, places and occasions but it provides the basis for those claims.

A further part of making good the claim that Aristotle's descriptive articulation of the mean can comprehend envy's wicked nature involves identifying a related passion that tracks a greater territory, but does so in a relevantly neutral way – as was suggested regarding “adultery” and “intimacy.” The *Nicomachean Ethics* alludes to one, speaking of “pleasure

and pain at what happens to our neighbors” (11.7, 1108b1–2). As adultery is a specific configuration of inappropriate intimacy, so envy is a specific configuration of inappropriate manifestations of this pain/pleasure. As intimacy is something that can be appropriate or inappropriate, so too can be this pain/pleasure. We appear to make sense of envy as a wicked passion, where it is related to a descriptive articulation of the doctrine of the mean.⁹

Reaching this conclusion on Aristotle’s triadic articulation is more challenging, particularly where one wants not only to relate envy to the mean, but also to locate it upon a pertinent scale.¹⁰ Envy’s analysis has revealed a complex structure, involving pain, comparison to peers’ well-doing in specific matters, attempts to destroy or deprive them of their achievements, etc. Given this, several things would need to be true in order to depict successfully envy in terms of excess, deficiency, and a mean. There would have to be a neutral specification of a passion that was amenable to analysis in terms of excess, deficiency, and the mean. Envy would have to find its place as either an excess or deficiency, with two related passions (one intermediate, the other the opposite excess or deficiency). The intermediate passion would have to be appropriate; the two extremes, inappropriate. The inappropriateness and appropriateness of all three would have to be explicable in terms of excess, deficiency, and the mean of a relevant matter (or matters). If several matters proved relevant, they would have to be co-ordinate with each other, and together explain the three passions, their status as excess, deficiency or mean, and the values accorded to them. Further, the analysis would have to do this in a way that can capture the features that Aristotle’s descriptive analysis captures well, including notions of time, place, end, etc.

Can this be achieved?

Certainly, the pain of envy can be analyzed in terms of more and less pain (and/or pleasure), and/or more and less intense pain (and/or

⁹ The underlying emotion is specified more generically here than what I offered in the intimacy–adultery example. While it would have been more interesting had Aristotle offered something similarly specific, and while a prescriptivist might suppose this is necessary, Aristotle’s project does not.

¹⁰ Up to this point, the analysis of wicked actions and passions has related them to inappropriate action and passion as depicted by the doctrine of the mean (i–iii), but has not attempted to situate what is wicked as excesses or deficiencies on a continuum. Yet, this too is an interest of Aristotle’s – as we shall see in the *Nicomachean Ethics*’ discussion of envy, indignation, and spite. Where so, what counts as excess, deficiency, and mean will have a very different understanding from the one had when speaking of anger or fear, their excesses, deficiencies, and means, and the allowance that certain manifestations of a relevant excess or deficiency can be collected together and named in a way that imputes baseness to them.

pleasure), and/or fewer and more occasions of it (and/or pleasure). Yet, this alone hardly captures the baseness described earlier. It is not that the extent, intensity, or frequency of envy's pain cannot be significant, but that these differences (taken individually or in combination) will not explain why at one extreme we have a base passion, where the medial is apt, and the lesser (amount, intensity, and/or frequency) is too little.

Perhaps the salient difference that distinguishes envy from the two related passions is not their affect (or not this alone). Envy's concern for peers' well-doing may be key. Concern for a peer's well-doing can be greater or lesser, can occur more or less frequently, can be more or less intense. However, as with pain, what makes envy base is not the extent, frequency, or intensity of concern for peers or their well-doing, with envy showing too extensive (limited) concern, too much (too little) of it, or concern too often (too infrequently), with another passion being deficient (excessive) in these, and a third finding a mean between them. Nor does a combination of painfulness and concern for others' well-doing seem promising. There seems little likelihood that there is a revealing understanding that can explain envy's baseness in terms of excess or deficiency of features central to it.

Reflection on the *Nicomachean Ethics*' portrayal of the triad of envy (*phthonos*), indignation (*nemesis*), and spite (*epichairekakia*) suggests the same (II.7, 1108b1–6).¹¹ Aristotle provides minimal sketches. They are said to concern pleasure and pain at what happens to neighbors. The indignant person feels pain when someone does well unworthily; the envious person exceeds the indignant by feeling pain when anyone does well; the spiteful person is deficient in pain, so much so that he or she enjoys others' doing poorly. A scale moving from pain to pleasure is in place. Envy stands as an excess regarding indignation by virtue of being pained upon neighbors' well-doing (worthily or not). In comparison to indignation, spite is deficient, by being deficient in pain, indeed taking pleasure when others fare badly. As well, the focus shifts from indignation's concern for neighbors' well-doing unworthily to spite and envy's concern for their doing well (worthily or not).

The following may help to display some prominent features of the *Nicomachean Ethics*' depiction:

¹¹ How best to translate these terms is controversial. See Taylor (2006), p. 120, for an interesting discussion of several possibilities.

| | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Range | Excess | Mean | Deficiency |
| Character trait | Envious | Indignant | Spiteful |
| Passion | Envy | Indignation | Spite |
| Pain | Yes | Yes | Falls short |
| Pleasure | (Unmentioned) | (Unmentioned) | Yes |
| Focus on others' | Well-doing | Well-doing | Well- and badly-doing |
| Basis | (Nothing further) | Unworthily | (Nothing further) |

Note: A continuum of pleasure *and* one of pain is used to try to capture Aristotle's point that spite is lacking so in pain that it is actually pleasant.

Appealing to pleasure and pain will not explain what Aristotle seeks to explain. For while the three passions can be placed on a scale running from pain to pleasure, and while both envy and indignation are painful, with spite also pleasant, it is not the case that envy is particularly and/or more frequently and/or more intensely painful, with indignation less so, and spite less so still. Moreover, were one to try to differentiate the three in these terms, it would not capture why one is apt and the others are inapt. Perhaps, then, changes in the passions' foci is crucial. All three passions concern the fortunes of others: envy and indignation responding to well-doing, with spite also responding to doing badly. Here again, matters can be represented in terms of more or less, greater or lesser intensity or frequency. But here, too, these differences will not capture the contrast between envy, spite, and indignation, or their value. For it is not the case that envy is more, more intensely, or more frequently concerned with neighbors' well-doing, while indignation and spite are less so, or vice versa. Rather, as Aristotle appreciates, indignation targets neighbors' well-doing unworthily, while envy responds in pain to their well-doing (worthily or not). This insight, however, comes at the cost of comprehending these passions in terms of excess and deficiency of relevant concerns, a problem exacerbated when one also attempts to appreciate spite's concern for and pleasure in others doing badly. The differentiation of the three and the value attributed to each, then, is captured neither by changes from pain to pleasure, nor a scale from excess to deficiency that speaks to neighbors' well-doing (and badly). These problems re-emerge on a scale that responds to the worth of their faring. Further, an attempt to harmonize these differences in a way that comprehends all three passions does not seem manageable in a way that captures each of the passions, their status as an excess, deficiency, or mean, or their value.

If so, then while Aristotle's understanding of envy as a wicked passion can be accounted for with his descriptive understanding of the mean,

the same cannot be concluded on his triadic understanding. Aristotle's account does not helpfully reveal envy as an excess (or deficiency) of something related to spite as its correlative deficiency (or excess), with indignation as the mean. The difficulty is not that Aristotle cannot account for envy being a wicked passion, or relate it to indignation and spite, or to his descriptive articulation of the mean. Rather, it reflects the general difficulty of accounting for passions as complex as these while also representing them, their salient features, and their value in terms of excess and deficiency, located upon a scale (or co-ordinated scales) concerning what is continuous and divisible.

6 INAPPROPRIATENESS AND DOMAIN

Our understanding of both inappropriate and wicked passions has concerned their ethical roles. Aristotle, however, takes passions to be inappropriate and appropriate in diverse settings, including rhetoric, aesthetics, dialectic, and politics. It is worth asking in what ways, if any, matters alter when we look more broadly.

It may help to recall two differences that have emerged. In general, passions that can be inappropriate or appropriate in their circumstances (passions like fear and pity) are felt by the virtuous as well as those of failed character (first).¹² Those of failed character feel them in inappropriate ways, while virtuous persons feel them in appropriate ways. For example, whereas gluttons may be overcome by their cravings, the temperate feel the pull of bodily desire in ways that contribute to their health; whereas cowards may simply flee from fear, the fear of the courageous helps to guide them, etc. So seen, the manifestations of these passions can be appropriate or inappropriate (second): inappropriate manifestations are associated with bad character and appropriate manifestations with virtuous character.

Wicked passions are different: the character of those who feel them is bad (first), as is their arousal (second). Passions such as spite, shamelessness, and envy cannot be felt appropriately. There can be no virtue associated with them and no mean of them – only the failed passion of a failed character. Rather than being inappropriate in their circumstances, wicked passions are simply inappropriate, inappropriate whatever the circumstances.

¹² There are exceptions, e.g., shame (discussed earlier).

Now, the matter at hand. The inappropriateness or appropriateness of passions in diverse domains is neither obviously nor straightforwardly tied to their ethical value – even though one might say that one is to feel them in accord with the mean, at the right time, in the right place, in the right manner ... (cf. *Pol.* VIII.7, 1342b12–16, 29–33). Inappropriate and appropriate fear in tragedy, for example, differs from its proper realization on the battlefield, in politics, rhetoric, at sea, in sickness, concerning bad reputation, etc. Jonathan Lear observes:

Aristotle is keenly aware of the important difference between a mimesis of a serious action and the serious action of which it is a mimesis. The emotional response which is appropriate to a mimesis – tragic pleasure and catharsis – would be thoroughly inappropriate to the real event.¹³

Yet, how is the inappropriateness and appropriateness of fear found in tragedy to be explained, and reconciled with its inappropriateness and appropriateness elsewhere?

Any plausible answer will have to heed differences amongst domains. Since Aristotle takes it that standards of correctness can differ, and can do so in light of the relevant art (*Poet.* 25, 1460b13–15), a worthy hypothesis maintains that what counts as inappropriate and appropriate can vary, can do so in light of the relevant art or domain, where this can include what will count as inappropriate or appropriate passion (type), and the nature of its appropriateness or inappropriateness.

The promise of this hypothesis can be seen by recollecting how Aristotle thinks about tragedy versus more ordinary life. What is appropriate and inappropriate in each is not identical, but alters with the domain in question – as Lear's observation suggests. Furthermore, the influence of domain affects not only the ways in which passions are to be realized, but also the passion types inappropriate and appropriate. According to Aristotle, tragedy concerns fear and pity. It allows for other passions, including love, hate, wonder, surprise, and compassion. It spurns other emotional responses, including what is monstrous and shocking, and perhaps others as well. The spurning of certain passion types, the inclusion of others as central or relevant, and the nature of inappropriateness or appropriateness is not given by an ethical account of appropriateness or inappropriateness; it is determined in light of the relevant poetic form.¹⁴

¹³ Lear (1998), p. 217.

¹⁴ For further discussion of the emotions appropriate to tragedy, see Leighton (2003); discussion of the conditions and basis for their proper deployment in rhetoric can be found in Leighton (2009).

Let us consider this more fully. On Aristotle's view tragedy is the poetic form centered on catharsis through fear and pity regarding the mimesis of an action that is complete, whole, and of magnitude – an action of a better person (though not one pre-eminent in virtue) whose *hamartia* lays waste to the person's life and many about him or her, as the person moves from good to bad fortune. These confines make clear the relevance of fear and pity; they also enable Aristotle to maintain the relevance of amazement, surprise, love, hate, fellow-feeling, appropriate pleasure, and the inappropriateness of what is monstrous or shocking. If so, the explanation of those passions deemed appropriate or inappropriate to tragedy depends (in part, at least) on the poetic form. Further, the proper roles relevant passions are to take are determined in light of these concerns. Fear, for example, is to bring catharsis. This role is quite different from fear's appropriate realizations elsewhere, and differently determined. In ethical matters, for example, fear's most prominent role concerns courage, as found on the battlefield, in connection with death in its finest conditions (*N.E.* III.6). There it is little concerned with *mimēsis*, learning, taking delight, *katharsis*, *hamartia*, awe, plot, or tragedy's pleasure.

On this approach, one allows that the passion types and realizations that are inappropriate or appropriate to tragedy can prove quite different from more ordinary life. It can be different again for comedy. Although we have little of Aristotle's thinking about comedy, we know that he takes it to depict people who are worse than ordinary (*Poet.* 2, 1448a16–18), and can surmise that fear and pity will no longer be central, and perhaps not even be appropriate to the form. Moreover, we can expect that other passions become prominent, primarily those having to do with what is ugly (*aischros*), and involving laughter (*to geloion*; *Poet.* 4, 1448b37 and 5, 49a31–37), perhaps even to include responses spurned for tragedy, e.g., the shocking or monstrous. Here, too, what counts as an inappropriate or appropriate passion sort and manifestation is set, at least in part, in terms of the pertinent form (comedy), rather than by an all-encompassing or distinctly “ethical” notion of inappropriateness or appropriateness.¹⁵ So, too, regarding passions' inappropriateness and appropriateness at festivals, in rhetoric, in religious rituals, politics, dialectic, and perhaps even in the activities of lovers of wisdom. What is to be counted as inappropriate or appropriate regarding passion, then, has

¹⁵ The buffoonery repudiated in social settings seems at home in comedy, particularly comedies of the older style (see *N.E.* v.8, 1128a1–b1; cf. *Pol.* VIII.17 1336b15–16). See Halliwell (2008) for further interesting examples and discussion (esp. pp. 317–29).

much to do with the nature and goals of the particular discipline, where this can affect both the relevant passion type (fear in tragedy vs. comedy) and the relevant passion occurrence (appropriate fear in tragedy vs. on the battlefield).

In holding that the inappropriateness and appropriateness of passion type and occurrence over diverse domains is not governed by a general or ethical concern for inappropriateness and appropriateness, the suggestion is not that of simple diversity or plurality of domains, where each is seen as freestanding, independently determined, or wholly disconnected. Rather, the diverse spheres of human activity are located within Aristotle's teleological framework, which subordinates them to the good (cf. *N.E.* 1.1). Thus, tragedy, comedy, rhetoric, dialectic, and any other practice one might consider should be understood in this light, related to and limited by human living and doing well (1.4, 1095a14–21). Differing domains, practices, activities ... may have particular and even unique places, roles, standards of excellence, etc. Nonetheless, Aristotle's teleological framework determines their place (or places), and therein limits what is inappropriate and appropriate to them – as, for example, generalship helps limit what counts as a good bridle (1.1, 1094a10–15).

If this is the right way to understand passions' appropriateness and inappropriateness over diverse domains, then our earlier understanding (sections 1–5) was overly general, and requires qualification. The elucidation of appropriate versus inappropriate versus wicked passions needs to be recast, seemingly as the elucidation of *ethically* appropriate versus *ethically* inappropriate versus *ethically* wicked passions. Again, what was counted as simply inappropriate versus appropriate (or inappropriate) in the circumstances seems better cast as simply inappropriate versus appropriate (or inappropriate) in *ethical* circumstances. And, perhaps, what was cast as inappropriate whatsoever the circumstances should be cast as inappropriate whatsoever the *ethical* circumstances.

These suggestions require both elucidation and scrutiny.

It has become clear that the forms of inappropriateness depicted in earlier sections of this chapter do not concern inappropriateness as such, but concern ethical inappropriateness and character. Further, it has become clear that there can be and are domains in which inappropriate and appropriate passions arise – where the determination of their appropriateness or inappropriateness is not that of ethical development or character, or a global notion. Rather, their appropriateness or inappropriateness is determined in light of their particular activity type as placed in Aristotle's teleological framework. What now requires elucidation is how matters of

inappropriateness and appropriateness as set in diverse domains should be seen and understood in terms of one another.

Consider that humor and provoking laughter are bound to be inappropriate to tragedy, of service and disservice to rhetoric, apt to comedy, and present in everyday life (*Rh.* III.18, 1419b3–9 and III.14, 1415a34–38; cf. *Rhax* 35, 1441b15–29). What gives rise to amusement, and amusement taken, can be central to a comedy, beyond the pale in tragedy, and even ordinary life.¹⁶ Differences in inappropriateness and appropriateness can have to do with the domain in question, can vary from domain to domain, and can do so both at the level of passion type and passion occurrence.

As well as underscoring the complexities involved with inappropriate and appropriate passion, the foregoing presses the concern for how inaptness or aptness in one domain is to be reconciled with its place elsewhere. Of particular interest will be how ethically inappropriate passion types and occurrences are to be reconciled with their plausible appropriateness elsewhere.

Aristotle, we have seen, is not inclined to the hegemony of distinctly ethical considerations or to Socrates' cull of poetry. Indeed, although concerned for the possible corruption of the young, Aristotle seems to allow that the buffoonery of comedy need not threaten the character or activities of its audience.¹⁷ Yet how can Aristotle countenance what goes on in comedy (and other domains), especially when what goes on there can be inappropriate in more ordinary life?

One explanation appeals to psychological impact. Struck by the power of habituation, Aristotle might simply be more optimistic than was the *Republic's* Socrates about habituation successfully overcoming what goes on in comedy. So seen, one can enjoy the pleasures of comic buffoonery, even if unseemly, and do so without real threat to moral character or subsequent behavior.

This explanation suits Aristotle's views on habituation as developed in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and the place he gives to the fine arts in the *Poetics* and *Politics*. It grants, however, that many pleasures of comedic buffoonery remain ethically deleterious. Their acceptability is so, *all things considered*. Contra the *Republic's* Socrates, whatever deleterious pressures these pleasures bring, they need not seriously impede ethical character or

¹⁶ See above as well as *N.E.* v.8 and *Rh.* II.2, 1379a28–30. The focus on comedy is as a stalking horse only.

¹⁷ Aristotle offers restrictions on the age at which one should see comedy, including limits on indecent talk (*Pol.* VII.17, 1336b1–34). Still, absent are the drastic and extensive prohibitions and restructuring of practices for which Socrates is well known, e.g., *Republic* x 605e ff.

behavior. So seen, certain comedic displays, passions, and their manner of arousal remain inapt in a way, but overall are not sufficiently damaging to be worrisome.¹⁸

A different kind of explanation highlights the domains themselves. It draws attention to the fact that differences in domains address different locales within Aristotle's teleological framework, and different circumstances. The circumstances of mundane life are not those of tragedy, comedy, rhetoric and vice versa; their placement within Aristotle's teleological framework differs. The explanation also recalls that in Aristotle's thinking what is inappropriate in one circumstance can be appropriate in another, and vice versa. Given this, there is no justifiable *prima facie* claim that because something is inapt in one domain (e.g., ethics) it is so elsewhere (e.g., comedy) or vice versa – just as there is no justified *prima facie* claim, for example, that anger inaptly expressed in one situation remains so when expressed elsewhere, or vice versa. Certainly, what can be inapt in one situation can be inapt in another, but that it is so requires further argument rather than serves as a presumption.

On a domain understanding, then, there is no supposition that because something is unseemly or deleterious outside of comedy, it is so in comedy, or vice versa. In this way, buffoonery that may be unacceptable outside of comedy need not be so within it. Appropriateness or inappropriateness in a particular domain is determined in terms of the ends and form of the domain – where the domain itself is located within and limited in terms of Aristotle's teleological framework. Differing domains and standards of appropriateness need not be in competition. What goes on in comedy can stay there – so long as what is there does not hamper the comedy itself or its place and role within Aristotle's teleological framework.

A domain approach to the differences of appropriateness is preferable to the psychological explanation. It fits well with and can explain why Aristotle has different standards for differing domains. It dispels the presumption that because something is inapt or apt in one domain it must be so in another. It makes good sense of Aristotle's view that the appropriateness of particular activities can vary with their locales.¹⁹ Thus, it seems true to the spirit of Aristotle's understanding of the value of passions and their manifestations in diverse domains, and helps to explain the same.

¹⁸ See Halliwell (2008), p. 319.

¹⁹ For example, what is appropriate in playing and enjoying music is affected by whether it serves relaxation, excellence, or amusement. Again, while the works of Pauson and Polygnotos appear acceptable in themselves, exposure to the former (but not the latter) provides poor training for youth (*Pol.* VIII.5–7, especially 1340a34–38; cf. *Poetics* 2, 1448a1–6).

An explanation via psychological impact is less helpful. While it is available to Aristotle, and coheres with his understanding of habituation, it does not itself help to explain or justify differences amongst domains. Further, it carries with it censure for what goes on in diverse domains if they do not meet ethical norms. That censure is not dispelled, only endured in light of other and overall benefits. Yet, this hardly captures Aristotle's attitude to the place of passions in diverse domains: he gives various passions varying roles in those domains, and legitimizes their place there.²⁰ A domain approach is preferable.

We have a promising explanation of appropriate and inappropriate passion over diverse domains. The explanation is credible for passions first described as inappropriate, and then spoken of as *ethically* inappropriate, i.e., those passions whose inaptness or aptness is circumstance sensitive: fear, anger, and so forth. What the reflections on diverse domains and activities has added to our understanding is that not only are differences amongst ethical circumstances relevant to passions' evaluation, but also that differences in the activity kind (e.g., comedy, tragedy) introduces further differences (including differences in circumstances) also relevant to the evaluation of passions.²¹ The nature of the ongoing activity, and its place in the teleological framework, involves differences that can help to explain, for example, that and why ethical character and ethically appropriate emotional expression need not be threatened by what is barred or permitted in comedy, rhetoric, politics and vice versa. In this way, what are ethically inappropriate expressions of passion might find appropriate places in tragedy, dialectic, rhetoric, and so forth.

It is tempting to posit the same for wicked passions. It is credible that arousing envy, for example, can be useful in rhetorical persuasion, dialectical argument, political recrimination, and so forth. Indeed, the *Rhetoric's* examination of envy prepares for its use (*Rh.* 11.10, 1387b22–24 and 1388a23–28), and Aristotle claims that rhetoricians are to arouse it.

²⁰ The evidence, of course is not one-sided. See for example *Rh.* 1.1, 1354a16–25, where appeals to passions are repudiated as appropriate to rhetoric. See also *N.E.* v.6, 1134a17–23.

²¹ The term domain is used here as a term of art, addressing different practical disciplines, arts, fields of study, practices, etc. In order to test the limits of passions' ethical inappropriateness and appropriateness, the argument features strikingly different domains (rhetoric vs. tragedy vs. comedy vs. more ordinary life). Yet not all differences of appropriateness are of this sort. By contrasting fear on the battlefield with its place in sickness vs. at sea, etc., Aristotle seems to make room for differences of appropriateness at a more local level (*N.E.* 111.6). Presumably, *these* differences will be discerned within ethical appropriateness, determined in terms of their particular characteristic circumstances, reasonable goals, etc.

After this, when the nature and importance [of the facts] are clear, lead the hearer into emotional reactions. These are pity and indignation and anger and hatred and envy and emulation and strife. (III.19, 1419b25–28)

Yet, isn't something amiss? Wicked passions include baseness within them, are themselves bad, as is the character of those who feel them. Without further argument, this suggests that there should be no occasion in which they are felt, not simply (as the domain explanation would allow) that there should be no "ethical" occasion in which they should be felt. Yet, Aristotle has us examine envy not only with a view to defending against its use, but also in order to lead an audience to feel it. With what justification do rhetoricians (and others) express and arouse wicked passions, passions that are inappropriate to feel?

One possibility is to stand with those who see speech as a plaything, a matter of drugging, beguiling, sorcery, simply an agent of persuasion (*Helen* 82B11–15; *Gorgias* 453; cf. *Ion* 535e). Although this might satisfy Gorgias or Ion, it is unlikely to satisfy Aristotle. Aristotle takes rhetoric to concern persuasion, but limits what is permissible, disallowing, for example, the unjust use of speech or the creation of a debased understanding (*Rh.* I.1, 1355a26–b7). These limits may be vague, but they seem to bar the approaches of Gorgias and Ion. Indeed, were their goals to reflect rhetoric as it should be, this would place rhetoric beyond the limits of what Aristotle could count as a justified practice (cf. *N.E.* I.1). If so, this would motivate Aristotle to dismiss rather than foster rhetoric – as it did Socrates (*Gorgias* 462b–c). An instrumental defense of wicked passions in rhetoric (and by extension elsewhere) fails to meet Aristotelian requirements for legitimacy.

Alternatively, one might suggest that these concerns are overblown, owing too much to the *Republic's* Socrates, and limiting what is acceptable in diverse domains by "ethical" concerns. As earlier noted, Aristotle is sensitive to different methods and procedures being appropriate to different domains. Since we have allowed a place for what would otherwise be counted as ethically inappropriate expression of passion arising in diverse domains, why not allow the same for wicked passions? Perhaps we should simply take Aristotle to have adopted a hands-off approach. So seen, one can arouse envy, spite, or shamelessness in rhetoric, and elsewhere, yet be unconcerned that it is bad, or that its arousal expresses and fosters bad character. This might be supported by arguing that the potential damage of allowing these passions is minimal, that the potential benefit is considerable, and that the power of habituation is so strong that serious worry about these passions in these domains is idle.

This alternative is an amalgam of the psychological impact and domain responses, having all the disadvantages of the former. Moreover, consider making the same claim regarding those actions that Aristotle offers as analogous to wicked passions, i.e., murder, theft, and adultery. There seems to be no case for supposing that in rhetoric or elsewhere, and with interests other than ethical ones in place, these become appropriate or permissible. Perhaps their representations can be appropriate on stage or elsewhere, but they are not. Rather, they are inappropriate full stop, outright wrong. If anything can be said in their defense, it is liable to be that it is only a purported case, or somehow necessary in the circumstance and excusable in light of this. Certainly, the fact that the context might be rhetoric, comedy, or dialectic makes no difference.

To reinforce this thought let us return to the *Nicomachean Ethics*' understanding of wicked actions, and the rare example of Aristotle arguing with a playful tease.

Hence in doing these things we can never be correct, but must invariably be in error. We cannot do them well or not well – by committing adultery, for instance, with the right woman at the right time in the right way. On the contrary, it is true without qualification that to do any of them is to be in error. (11.6, 1107a15–18)

Mustn't Aristotle conclude the same for wicked passions? Feeling envy is not murder or adultery, but each is base, without inherent goodness. Thus, despite its potential usefulness, envy should have no proper place in rhetoric, poetics, or elsewhere because of its base nature, the evaluative limits of rhetoric and other venues, and Aristotle's position regarding what counts as an acceptable human practice and activity.

We have made progress, but remain in a quandary from which I see no adequate escape. Explicating the *Nicomachean Ethics*' view of inappropriate passion, we find two significantly different cases, inappropriateness in circumstances and wicked passions. Aristotle's ethical framework has ways of making sense of each, and his reflections on envy show that he can articulate the defective nature of wicked passions in some detail. Further, he can make sense of all this on at least one version of the mean. This allows us to understand why Aristotle rebuffs claims that envy is natural to the divine nature.

Where the concern shifts from ethical matters to other domains, the understanding of inappropriateness and appropriateness also shifts, doing so in light of the relevant domain as situated within Aristotle's teleological framework. In view of this, things inappropriate in their circumstances,

as found in everyday life, can prove appropriate elsewhere, and vice versa. This occurs without threatening ethical appropriateness or the maintenance of ethical character. Moreover, it indicates that inappropriateness and appropriateness in diverse domains need not be straightforwardly at the behest of what is ethically inappropriate or appropriate.

Matters are different for wicked passions. Their base nature seems to prevent their expression ever being appropriate – whatever the circumstances or domain, no matter how strategically useful or advantageous. Yet, the *Rhetoric* both prepares for expressing wicked passions and arousing them in others. Our best understanding that allows this has been an explanation via psychological impact. Still, it is not satisfactory. We understand better that and why the poets were wrong to attribute envy to the divine nature, but remain puzzled why Aristotle prepares us to deploy envy in rhetoric. This puzzlement can only deepen when one recalls that even the *Philebus*' Socrates (though operating with a quite different view of *phthonos*), finds it unjust, but nonetheless apt in comedy (48a–b, 49d).

PART IV

Virtues

Beauty and morality in Aristotle

T. H. Irwin

I CONCEPT AND PROPERTY

According to Aristotle, the *Nicomachean Ethics* is a work of political science, and political science considers “just and kalon things” (1.3, 1094b14).¹ He devotes a whole book to a discussion of justice, but he offers no explicit discussion of the kalon. The *Eudemian Ethics* begins by rejecting the view expressed in the Delian epigram, that the most kalon, the best, and the pleasantest are three different things. Aristotle affirms that happiness is the one thing that has all three superlative properties (1214a1–8). But he does not support this claim with a detailed account of the kalon. It is not surprising, then, that critics have tried to fill this gap in Aristotle, or that they have found it difficult to reach agreement.

I want to discuss some of the questions that arise about the kalon in the *Ethics*, with some reference to the use of “kalon” elsewhere in the Aristotelian corpus.² I will not consider other potentially relevant sources of evidence. These sources include the Platonic corpus, the use of “kalon” and its Latin equivalent “honestum” in later ethical thought, and, more generally, the use of “kalon” in non-philosophical Greek in and before Aristotle’s time. I leave them aside because I am not confident that they have been adequately studied for our present purposes.³

I read an earlier version of this paper at a conference organized by the Chicago Consortium on Ancient Philosophy. I am especially grateful for remarks by Rachel Barney, Aryeh Kosman, Gabriel Richardson Lear, and Anton Ford. I have also benefited from reading a draft of an unpublished paper by Roger Crisp, “Nobility in Aristotle’s *Ethics*.”

¹ Since the translation of “kalon” is one of the disputed questions I will discuss, I will normally leave the term untranslated, without italics. I will use the neuter singular (or occasionally the neuter plural “kala”).

² I use “*Ethics*” to refer to the three ethical treatises in the corpus.

³ Many of us, e.g., are in the habit of citing Dover (1974) for an account of the non-philosophical usage of moral terms. Although Dover is enviably well informed, his claims about the significance of some terms – and notably “kalon” – may tell us more about his philosophical assumptions than about Greek concepts.

Three interpretations that have been offered give us some idea of the questions that deserve some discussion: (1) An aesthetic interpretation advises us to translate “kalon” by “beautiful,” and it takes Aristotle to claim that the kalon in morality is a type of beauty. (2) A psychological interpretation argues that the kalon is the special object of the spirited part of the soul (*thumos*), so that we can understand the kalon to the extent that we understand Aristotle’s version of the Platonic tripartition of soul. (3) A moral interpretation recommends the translation “right,” and so takes Aristotle to speak of moral rightness.⁴

But before we defend any of these three interpretations, or reject them in favor of another, we may usefully pause to notice the different questions that we might try to answer. Some relevant questions are these: (a) How should we translate “kalon” in different contexts? (b) What is Aristotle’s concept of the kalon in different contexts? (c) In virtue of what property or properties are things kalon?

The first and second questions are closely connected. If we can grasp the concept that Aristotle expresses through “kalon,” we should translate the Greek term with the English term that most nearly expresses the same concept. But this simple advice becomes more difficult to follow if Aristotle takes “kalon” to have different senses, and therefore (in his terms) to be homonymous or multivocal (*pollachôs legomenon*).⁵ If it has different senses, we should, ideally, translate it with an English term that has the same range of senses, and decide in each context what concept it expresses. But if no English term has the same range of senses, we may have to use different terms according to our judgment about what concept is expressed in a given context.

The third question needs to be separated from the first two, because a bad answer to the second question may be a good answer, or partial answer, to the third. We can illustrate this point from familiar disputes about the meaning of “good” and “right.”⁶ When utilitarians argue that the right is what promotes utility, they assume that they can have a reasonable argument with non-utilitarians about this question. We seem to

⁴ I have discussed some of these questions in volume 1 of my (2007–09), §§116–21. Some of my earlier views were criticized by Rogers (1993).

⁵ I am assuming that different senses are sufficient for Aristotelian homonymy, not that they are necessary. This question is fully discussed by Shields (1999), Chapters 1–3.

⁶ See Ross (1930), Chapters 1–2. He distinguishes the relevant questions as follows: “The real point at issue between hedonism and utilitarianism on the one hand and their opponents on the other is not whether ‘right’ means ‘productive of so and so’; for it cannot with any plausibility be maintained that it does. The point at issue is that to which we now pass, viz. whether there is any general character that makes right acts right, and if so, what it is” (p. 16).

share some concept of the right that a utilitarian can use to argue for a utilitarian answer to a further question about rightness. We may say that a utilitarian shares a concept of rightness with a non-utilitarian, and that the result of a successful utilitarian argument would be an account of the property of rightness.⁷

However crude this distinction may be, it helps utilitarians to adopt a more flexible position than the one they might otherwise adopt. They do not have to claim that “good” has many different senses, even if it refers to different properties; nor do they have to offer a utilitarian account of all the properties that “good” refers to. They might, for instance, be utilitarians about moral goodness, but non-utilitarians about aesthetic goodness. Hence they may agree that the world is better if it contains both moral and aesthetic goodness than it would be if it contained only moral goodness; if this comparison is possible, “goodness” should have the same sense when it is applied to both forms of goodness.

This summary of a utilitarian doctrine about the concept “good” and the property of goodness may suggest a possible account of some of Aristotle’s claims about the *kalon*. On the one hand, we may doubt whether he recognizes different senses, and we may be unsure about what these senses are. On the other hand, we may have good reason to claim that, in Aristotle’s view, and not only in our view, “*kalon*” refers to different properties.

2 THE BEAUTIFUL AND THE *KALON*

Even these simple distinctions between different questions will help us to see more clearly what we should ask about Aristotle, and what might be relevant to answering different questions.

An aesthetic interpretation of the *kalon* rests on these assumptions. (1) “*Kalon*” in Greek should often be rendered “beautiful.” (2) Aristotle takes “*kalon*” to have a single sense. (3) He sometimes uses it in contexts where “beautiful” is the right rendering. On the strength of these assumptions we may infer that (4) “*kalon*” in the ethical works means “beautiful” and Aristotle refers to the beauty of morally virtuous actions, for example.

While (1)–(3) are all defensible, they do not justify (4). I will argue that Aristotle may allow that “*kalon*” has a single sense, but this single sense

⁷ We might try to connect this distinction with Aristotle’s account of different types of definition in *APo* II, explored by Charles (2000). But Aristotle’s account is obscure enough to need quite a lot of explication before it can throw light on other questions. And so I will not refer to it any further here.

is not captured by “beautiful,” even though he often uses “kalon” to say that something is beautiful. Since beauty is only one characteristic that we may refer to with “kalon,” we need more than the use of “kalon” to show that he has beauty in mind in a particular context.

To defend this claim it is helpful to survey the corpus as a whole. If we can be confident that outside the ethical works Aristotle uses “kalon” for beauty, we need some good reason to overturn the presumption that this is how he uses the term in the *Ethics* as well. But if we find that he uses it to refer to other properties besides beauty throughout the corpus, we have no basis for the presumption that it refers to beauty in the *Ethics*.

3 VARIETIES OF KALA⁸

Some remarks make it clear that Aristotle sometimes uses “kalon” to refer to beauty.⁹ His casual comments about birds and animals do not depend on his biological theories. He does not suggest, for instance, that the color of the bison’s horn or of the chatterer’s feathers has any further function, or that we need to recognize any such function to recognize the kalon aspect of the bird or animal. These fit the general description of the kalon as what is pleasant through sight or hearing (*Top.* 146a22).

But the most important examples of kala in the corpus do not fit this pattern. When Aristotle urges us to study natural organisms, he tells us that if we take pleasure in the craft that produces works of art, we should take pleasure in the nature that produces the plants and animals we see around us, however unattractive they may be (*P.A.* 645a7–8). When he tells us that the natural and the kalon are present in all animals (645a23–25), he does not refer to birds with beautiful feathers, and so on, but to teleological order (645a33–37). Both craft and nature present us with the kalon in their goal-directed constitution.

Aristotle has the same order in mind when he speaks of the kalon as consisting in order, symmetry, definiteness, and greatness (*Met.* 1078a31–b2; *Poet.* 1450b36; *Pol.* 1326a33; *Top.* 116b21).¹⁰ He attributes the first three characteristics to the kalon in mathematical objects, and all four to the kalon in plays, cities, and organisms. Greatness is relative to the function of a goal-directed whole, natural or artificial.

What is kalon in the construction of a tragedy or a city is fine, appropriate, and admirable, because it makes the tragedy or the city fit to

⁸ I have discussed more fully the passages cited in this section in my paper *The Sense and Reference of Kalon in Aristotle* (2010).

⁹ See *H.A.* 616b16–18, 630a35; *G.A.* 769b18–20; and [Aristotle], *Mir. Ausc.* 830b16–19.

¹⁰ Ross (1924), *ad loc.*, cites these passages.

perform its function well. It does not follow that Aristotle also takes this property of being *kalon* to constitute beauty in a city or a tragedy. He does not suggest that the aesthetic response appropriate to the color of a bird's feathers is also appropriate to these other *kalon* objects. He does not deny that such a response would be appropriate, but his claim that they are *kalon* does not assert that such a response is appropriate.

In these cases, then, what is *kalon* is fine, admirable, and fitting insofar as it is *kalon*; we may reasonably prefer these translations over "beautiful." If this is so, we can approach the uses of "*kalon*" in the *Ethics* without any presumption in favor of the view that Aristotle has beauty in mind. The rest of the corpus does not support any such presumption.

4 THE KALON IN ETHICS

Aristotle does not take it to be controversial that his ethical works are about the *kalon*. The moral virtues are the concern of political science, which examines just and *kalon* things (1094b14–15). A *kalon* upbringing is needed for someone who is to study "just things and *kalon* things, and in general political things" (1095b5). Political science is concerned "to make the citizens have a certain character and to be good and to be doers of *kalon* actions" (1099b31–32). The end of virtue is the *kalon* (*M.M.* 1190a29), and virtue receives praise because it makes us do *kalon* actions (1101b32). Moral education involves pain and pleasure because they affect our tendency to do *kalon* actions (1104b9–11), and the mark of virtuous people is their pleasure in *kalon* actions (1099a17–18). In rewards and punishments legislators are concerned to encourage *kalon* actions (1113b25). Both prudence and political science are concerned with *kalon* and just things (1144a12).

The human good is the comprehensive end pursued by political science (1094b6–7), which aims at the good of a city because its achievement and preservation is greater and more complete than the good of an individual (1094b7–9); for though it is satisfactory to achieve and to preserve it for one individual, it is more *kalon* and more divine to achieve and to preserve it for a city or a nation (1094b9–10). Why does Aristotle say it is more *kalon* and more divine? We can gather his point from the claim that he is explaining, that the achievement and preservation of the collective good is greater and more complete. "More divine" probably picks up "greater," since greater power is the mark of the gods. "More *kalon*" probably picks up "more complete"; we achieve the good more completely if we achieve it for a city, and its greater completeness consists in the common good of

its citizens. Aristotle's very first claim about the *kalon* in the *E.N.* introduces us to one recurrent point, that the complete good for the individual is also *kalon* and admirable insofar as it extends to the common good. A similar claim begins the *E.E.*, where Aristotle affirms at the beginning that happiness is both best and most *kalon*, and is pleasantest for that reason (1214a7–8). The aim we set ourselves is the goal of *kalon* living (1214b6–7).

Kalon things are a proper subset of non-instrumental goods (*E.E.* 1248b23–25; *E.N.* 1176b7–10). They are praiseworthy; and since virtues are concerned with the *kalon*, they are also praiseworthy. Whatever is praiseworthy is in some way voluntary, since voluntary actions are the appropriate objects of praise and blame (1109b31; *E.E.* 1223a9–15). We praise people for their actions and states of character, but congratulate them for their success (1101b12–34). Even if the actions do not succeed in their aim, they and their agents are still appropriately praised (*M.M.* 1190a34–b6; *Rhet.* 1367b32–34).

This connection between the *kalon*, the praiseworthy, and the voluntary suggests that Aristotle has in mind a different property from the *kalon* in a peacock's feathers, numbers, and the natural order. In these cases the *kalon* is an appropriate object of admiration, but is not an object of praise and it is not the product of voluntary action. Physical beauty (*kallos*) is a natural good, but insofar as it is beyond our control it is not praiseworthy, and so it does not belong to the *kalon* that concerns political science. Aristotle has different properties in mind when he speaks of the *kalon* in physical appearance and in moral virtue.

In the case of morality, we have some reason to say that “*kalon*” is being used in a different sense from the sense relevant to physical beauty or to mathematical objects, but the reason is not compelling. If we ask Aristotle whether physical attractiveness and just action are both *kalon*, he may not believe that our question rests on an equivocation. He may believe that moral and non-moral *kala* are *kala* in the same sense, even though the properties that make them *kalon* are different.

We can now return to one of our initial questions. Does Aristotle's use of “*kalon*” in moral contexts indicate that he has an aesthetic conception of moral value?¹¹ If he does, we may reasonably speak of moral beauty, and we may speak of a moral sense that corresponds to the aesthetic sense

¹¹ Taylor (2006) maintains that the *kalon* must have an aesthetic aspect: “I take it as fundamental to understanding the concept of the *kalon* that to be *kalon* is to be attractive, to be such as to provide an incentive to choice and action via such emotional attitudes as love, admiration, and

that makes us aware of beauty. But we have found good reason to doubt the claims about the *kalon* that would support an aesthetic interpretation of Aristotle's moral doctrine.

If we suppose that "*kalon*" means "beautiful" or refers to beauty in moral contexts, we have to assume that Aristotle uses it in the same sense throughout the corpus, and that the relevant sense always introduces beauty.

Neither of these assumptions is secure, however. Aristotle may well use the term in a different sense. And even if he uses it in a single sense, the sense may be "admirable" or "fitting" rather than "beautiful." Although an aesthetic response is appropriate for some of the cases of the *kalon* that we have discussed, Aristotle says nothing to suggest that this is always the appropriate response. Although he sometimes uses "*kalon*" to pick out beauty, we have no reason to suppose that this is how he always uses it, or that this is how he uses it in moral contexts.¹²

These observations do not refute an aesthetic interpretation of Aristotle's account of moral value. They refute only attempts to rest such an interpretation on his use of "*kalon*." Closer study of Aristotle's claims about moral value may persuade us that he takes an aesthetic view of it, and that he regards it as a type of beauty. In the light of this closer study we may decide that "beautiful" is the appropriate rendering of "*kalon*" even in moral contexts. But the use of "*kalon*" in these contexts creates no presumption in favor of an aesthetic interpretation.

Should we, however, apply the description of the *kalon* as involving order, proportion, definiteness, and magnitude to morality? The passages that include this description do not claim to describe every sort of *kalon*. Moreover, the description does not throw much light on the *kalon* in morality. Actions and characters may display many sorts of appropriateness, proportion, order, and so on. We would like to find out which sort is relevant to morality. Does Aristotle believe that, for instance, virtuous actions are *kalon* insofar as they are brave, or just, or temperate, etc., and that they share no further property that makes them *kalon*? Or does he think they share a further property?

emulation. It is this failure to capture that aspect that is what is basically wrong with the suggestion of Owens (1981) that *kalon* should be translated 'right'. That rendering does indeed capture the fundamental normativity of the concept, but at the price of severing its links with the emotions and aesthetic responses" (p. 89n). Taylor refers to Joseph Owens (1981).

¹² Aristotle's treatment of the virtue of magnificence may appear to count against this claim. I have discussed this virtue in my (2010), cited above.

5 THE KALON, SPIRIT, AND REASON

The kalon is an object of choice that is co-ordinate with the advantageous and the pleasant (1104b30–1105a1).¹³ This reference to three objects of choice may remind us of the three types of desire that Aristotle ascribes to three parts of the soul. Advantage, as a matter of rational calculation, may be assigned to the rational part, and pleasure, as a matter of immediate attraction, may be assigned to the appetitive part. This leaves the kalon to be assigned to the spirited part.

According to Plato's *Republic*, the spirited part is especially concerned with honor and shame, and we may suppose that Aristotle intends us to connect the kalon with honor and shame in ways that would appeal to the spirited part.¹⁴ Since the kalon is opposed to the shameful (*aischron*), and since the spirited part is moved by shame at the actions that fall short of one's ideals for oneself, we may suppose that a sense of the kalon belongs to the well-trained spirited part. This may be what Aristotle has in mind when he speaks of a natural impulse towards the kalon (*phusikê hormê pros [epi] to kalon*; *M.M.* 1200a1, 5; cf. 1206b18–29).

This connection between the kalon and the spirited part is helpful, insofar as the spirited part is capable of being moved by motives that are not purely self-confined. Even if some course of action is advantageous to me, I may be deterred from it by the thought that it would involve shameful betrayal of my friends. Insofar as the spirited part is moved by shame, it acts on aims and motives that go beyond advantage. Young people tend to be magnanimous, and to choose kalon actions over expedient: "for their lives are guided by their character rather than by reasoning, and reasoning is of [i.e., aims at] the expedient, whereas virtue is of the kalon" (*Rhet.* 1389a32–35). Older people, however, "live with a view to the expedient, not the kalon, more than is right, because they are self-lovers; for the expedient is good for oneself, but the kalon is good without qualification" (1389b36–1390a1). The kalon incorporates the sorts of values that appeal to an unselfish sense of honor and shame.

¹³ "There being three objects of choice and three of avoidance, the kalon, the advantageous, the pleasant, and their contraries, the base, the injurious, the painful, about all of these the good man tends to go right and the bad man to go wrong, and especially about pleasure; for this is common to the animals, and also it accompanies all objects of choice; for the kalon and the advantageous also appear pleasant" (1104b30–1105a1).

¹⁴ Burnyeat (1980) and Cooper (1999e) emphasize the connection between the kalon and the *thumos*. I am unsure about precisely how close they take the connection to be, and so I am unsure whether my later points about the connection between the kalon and reason are inconsistent with their claims.

But although the outlook of the spirited part tells us something about the kalon, it does not tell us enough. For Aristotle denies that the spirited part aims at the kalon (1116b23–1117a5). The action of those who are moved by the spirited part is similar in some ways to the action of brave people who act for the sake of the kalon. But the spirited part does not move us to act for the sake of the kalon and does not make us brave. To become brave, and to act for the sake of the kalon, we need decision (*prohairesis*) and the end (*to heneka tou*). Since decision is a form of desire that rests on wish (*boulêsis*), and hence belongs to the rational part, we can act for the sake of the kalon only insofar as we are moved by rational desire rather than spirit. Hence the kalon appeals primarily to the rational rather than the spirited part. Virtue requires the appropriate emotions, but “the impulse must come from reason because of the kalon” (*M.M.* 1191a22–23).

These remarks in the *Ethics* conflict with the *Rhetoric*.¹⁵ The *Rhetoric* suggests that the unselfish outlook that aims at the kalon is not the outlook of reason, because reason is confined to calculation of one’s own advantage. The *Ethics* rejects this view of the outlook of reason; it takes the outlook of the rational part to be the only one that moves us to act for the sake of the kalon. In Aristotle’s view, the best kind of self-love expresses the outlook of reason insofar as it aims at the kalon (1169a2–6).

6 “FOR ITS OWN SAKE” AND “BECAUSE OF THE KALON”

Can we say more about what property satisfies this description? Perhaps Aristotle has nothing more to say about it in general. Perhaps he means simply that things are kalon insofar as they are non-instrumentally good, praiseworthy and hence products of voluntary action, and expressions of the correct rational order. To learn more about the correct rational order, we need to learn more about the virtues, since they are the different forms of this order.

To show that Aristotle intends this purely schematic and formal role for the kalon, we might appeal to the connection between choosing virtuous action for its own sake and choosing it for the sake of the kalon. Aristotle takes these two descriptions of the virtuous person’s motive to be inseparable. Sometimes he says only that the virtuous person has to decide on the virtuous action for its own sake, and he does not suggest

¹⁵ I have tried to explain some of the differences between the *Ethics* and the *Rhetoric* on these points in my (1996).

that a further condition needs to be added before the decision is correct. At other times he maintains that it is characteristic of the virtuous person to decide on an action because it is *kalon*. To say that it is *kalon*, on this view, is simply to say that it is to be chosen for its own sake.

This schematic conception of the *kalon* in morality might help us to explain how we can speak of the *kalon* univocally when we speak of numbers, the order of the universe, and just action as *kalon*. In each case we refer to an order that is rationally satisfying and deserves admiration on that account. But our claim that an order is *kalon* does not tell us how it is *kalon*. In the area of morality claims about the *kalon* tell us that something deserves praise and results from voluntary action; but they do not tell us anything more about what property is the basis for this praise. Is this an adequate account of the *kalon*?

7 PRAISED OR PRAISEWORTHY?

We might wonder whether we missed a clue to Aristotle's meaning when we assumed that "*epaineton*" should be rendered by "praiseworthy." The rendering "praised" might also be defended, and we might point out that Aristotle sometimes supports a claim that something is *epaineton* by observing that it is praised (see, e.g., 1101b12–16). If, then, something is *kalon* insofar as it is praised, might we say that we act virtuously for the sake of the *kalon* insofar as we choose something both for its own sake and for the praise that will result from it? Since this is an additional motive, it does not compromise the virtuous person's commitment to acting virtuously for its own sake.

This is not Aristotle's view, however. Those who have the bravery of citizens lack genuine bravery, but they do what they do because of a virtue, since they act because of shame and because of a desire for something *kalon*, insofar as they act out of desire for honor (*dia kalou orexin [timês gar]*, 1116a27–29). Such people are not brave, because they lack the appropriate decision and end (1117a5). Those who care about being praised rather than about being honored are open to the same objection. The virtuous person wants to be praised and honored by the right people for the right things; but praise and honor count for relatively little in comparison with being worthy of them. This remark about the magnanimous person (1124a12–20) applies to the virtues in general.

If it were characteristic of virtuous people to choose the virtuous action because it is praised, those who choose the virtuous action for the sake

of external goods (*E.E.* 1249a14–17) could be completely virtuous (*kaloi kagathoi*). The distinguishing characteristic of virtue is choice of *kalon* actions because they are *kalon*. If this were simply the choice of praised actions because they are praised, it would be choice of virtuous action for the sake of an external good. But Aristotle denies that virtuous people choose virtuous actions for the sake of external goods.

While Aristotle believes that the *kalon* is *epaineton*, he does not believe that “*kalon*” means “praised,” or that choosing virtue because it is *kalon* is choosing it because it is praised. The *kalon* is praised by people who have true beliefs about what deserves praise, and the virtuous person tries to do what will deserve the praise of such people. Aristotle maintains that virtuous people care more about being praiseworthy than about being praised. He does not explicitly formulate the Stoic claim that the honestum is by nature praiseworthy even if no one praises it, but the Stoic claim expresses his view about the *kalon*.¹⁶

8 THE KALON AND IMPARTIALITY

If we cannot identify the *kalon* with what is praised, should we revert to the schematic account, and say that the *kalon* in morality is praiseworthy insofar it appeals to rational desire as formed by practical reason in the right decision? This attempt to explain praiseworthiness is insufficient; for Aristotle recognizes that health and other things are non-instrumental goods, but are not praiseworthy (1248b18–26). These goods seem to count as *kalon*, according to the explanation we have just offered, since they are objects of the right decision. Why, then, does Aristotle deny that they are *kalon*?

Since the *Ethics* does not answer this question, we may reasonably ask whether Aristotle assumes some answer. It is worth considering the implicit answer that he offers in the *Rhetoric*. He observes that when we praise someone we do not consider whether he benefited himself, but often praise him more if he benefited himself less in order to benefit others more. Achilles is praiseworthy because of his self-sacrifice, counting his own interest for less than the interest of another (1359a1–5).¹⁷ The less partial

¹⁶ “Quod vere dicimus, etiamsi a nullo laudetur, natura esse laudabile” (Cicero, *De Officiis* i 14).

¹⁷ Taylor (2006) observes that Achilles acted out a desire for revenge. He asks: “Is self-sacrifice, then, noble because it promotes the common good? Or is it simply that we admire people who care enough for their friends to give their lives to avenge them, and wish that we could have such friends? It does not seem to me that Aristotle gives a determinate answer to that question” (p. 93n.).

outlook concerned with the *kalon* is characteristic of the virtues, and it explains why the virtues are praiseworthy.¹⁸ We have noticed the remark that young people are magnanimous because they care more about the *kalon* than about their advantage.

The *Rhetoric* cannot be relied on for decisive evidence, because it sometimes conflicts with the *Ethics*. We saw, for instance, that the passage on young and old people also says that young people are moved by character rather than reason. In the *Ethics* Aristotle does not separate motivation by the *kalon* from motivation by reason. How much of the passage in the *Rhetoric* can we transfer to the *Ethics*? What should we say about the connection between the *kalon* and magnanimity, or between the *kalon* and unselfishness?

The contrast between the *kalon* and the expedient is present in the *Ethics* no less than in the *Rhetoric* (1125a11–12, 1168a9–12, 1169a3–6; *Pol.* 1338a30–32). Most people are ready to wish for what is *kalon*, but tend to decide to do what is expedient; and whereas it is *kalon* to benefit another without expecting a return, it is expedient to receive a benefit (1162b35–1163a1). If the *kalon* were simply whatever we want for its own sake, it would be trivial to claim that we wish for what is *kalon*; for wish (*boulêsis*) is essentially wanting something for its own sake. But Aristotle's claim that we wish for *kalon* things for their own sake is not meant to be trivial. It means that our generous impulses towards unselfish ends are not translated into decisions that result in unselfish actions. Since he expresses this point through a contrast between the *kalon* and the expedient, he takes concern for the *kalon* to be impartial concern.

Aristotle sometimes takes it for granted that a virtue is beneficial to other people. He remarks that one type of wasteful person seems to be much better than the ungenerous person because the wasteful person benefits others, while the ungenerous person benefits no one, not even himself (1121a27–30). Conferring a benefit is *kalon*, whereas receiving it is merely expedient (1168a9–12). It is more *kalon* to have friends in our good fortune (1171a25–26), because it is *kalon* to confer benefits (1171b16), especially without thought of return (1162b36–1163a1). The generous person's actions benefit others, and thereby display the characteristic of virtue.¹⁹

¹⁸ See 1366a33–36, 1366a36–b1, 1366b36–1367a4, 1367b6–7.

¹⁹ "Hence it is proper for the generous person to give to those he ought to give to, more than to take from where he ought to take from, and not to take from where he ought not to take from. For it is proper to virtue to confer benefit more than to receive it, and to do *kalon* actions more than to avoid base actions" (1120a9–13).

Virtuous people do what they ought (*dein*) to do; in doing so they do kalon actions, and so benefit others.

Someone who has a true conception of himself will also want to do kalon actions.²⁰ The praiseworthy (1169a8) type of self-love requires the formation of a character that aims at the kalon. Aristotle rejects the view that identifies every form of self-love with selfishness, and with indifference to the good of others. Hence he claims that correct self-love moves us to pursue kalon action. This claim tends to refute the attack on self-love only if action for the sake of the kalon is unselfish.

On this basis, we can fix the property that Aristotle refers to in speaking of the kalon. If “kalon” in this context refers only to action embodying the correct rational order, the claim that rational self-love pursues the kalon does not help to answer the charge of selfishness; for we need some further argument to show that concern for the correct rational order will require unselfish action. Aristotle assumes, however, if rational self-lovers pursue the kalon, they act unselfishly for the good of others.

This argument needs a closer look. Aristotle is committed to all these claims: (1) The rational self-lover aims at his good as a rational agent. (2) His good as a rational agent is an order defined by reason. (3) The order defined by reason is kalon. (4) The kalon requires unselfish concern for the good of others. If we take the first two steps to be uncontroversial, the controversial move comes either in the move from (2) to (3) or in the move from (3) to (4). Why is it better to find the point of controversy in the move from (2) to (3), as I have done, than to find it in the move from (3) to (4)?

I offer three reasons for preferring my account of the argument. (a) If we confine ourselves to this chapter, we find that Aristotle seems to take the disputed point to be settled once we admit that the rational self-lover aims at the kalon. (b) His conception of the kalon as necessarily connected to the good of others has been anticipated earlier in the *Ethics*, in the passages I have mentioned. (c) It also fits his conception of the kalon in the *Rhetoric*.

Each of these reasons is needed to make a convincing case. The first reason by itself might reasonably incline us to the account I have offered. But we might hesitate to read so much into a single passage without preparation. We can reasonably be less hesitant if we regard the earlier

²⁰ “When everyone is contending towards the kalon and straining to do the most kalon actions, the community will gain everything it ought to (*deonta*), and each individual will gain the greatest of goods, if that is the character of virtue” (1169a8–11).

passages in the *Ethics* as preparation for the claim about the kalon and the common good. But since these earlier passages do not offer an explicit conception of the kalon, we might hesitate to commit Aristotle to the generalization that he seems to endorse in his claim about the common good. We can remove this hesitation if we appeal to the *Rhetoric*. Even though that work does not fix Aristotle's view, it describes views that he might regard as familiar. If he regards the connection between the kalon and unselfishness as familiar, he may reasonably rely on it without a full explication.

The appeal to impartiality and unselfishness is intended to express what the *Rhetoric* and the *Ethics* have in common. They do not precisely agree; for the *Rhetoric* does not speak of the common good, and the *Ethics* does not say, as the *Rhetoric* does, that acting for the kalon and doing praiseworthy action is against one's own interest. Still, we can use the *Rhetoric* to clarify what Aristotle takes for granted in his contrast between the kalon and the good of the agent. My health is a good for me that does not necessarily contribute to the good of others, but my justice and temperance are goods both for me and for others; in that respect they promote a common good, and not only my good.

9 "KALON" AND THE KALON

We can now return to some of our initial questions, and try to answer them. (1) Aristotle takes a peacock's feathers, mathematical objects, natural organisms, and virtuous actions to be kalon, and hence admirable, and fitting. Though he takes kala to be homonymous, he may not take them to be kalon in different senses. (2) If we want a single translation to fit all these cases, we might reasonably choose "fitting" or "fine." (3) He does not ascribe the same property to all these kalon things, and he does not give the same account of what makes them kalon. Some things are kalon insofar as they are beautiful, others insofar as they are well ordered, and others insofar as they are praiseworthy attempts to promote a common good.

We have good reason, therefore, to doubt whether we ought to translate "kalon" by "right" in moral contexts. Such a translation obscures the fact that Aristotle uses "kalon" in the non-moral contexts we have mentioned. But we still have good reason to believe that the property he picks out in moral contexts through his use of "kalon" is moral rightness.

This conclusion does not imply that morality and beauty, as Aristotle conceives them, are entirely unconnected. We may still have good reason to believe that the virtuous person will respond aesthetically to virtuous people and actions. These questions deserve exploration, and I do not mean to prejudge the results of such exploration. I have only rejected arguments that rely on Aristotle's use of "kalon." His use of this term does not express a conviction about morality and beauty.

*Justice in the Nicomachean Ethics Book V**Hallvard Fossheim*

It is generally assumed that general justice in *Nicomachean Ethics* v is an ethical virtue. There are at least two ways in which to understand this statement. One might either take the claim to be that justice is best defined as an ethical virtue, or one might take it to mean only that it is possible to characterize justice in terms of ethical virtue, without thereby holding justice to be an ethical virtue. The first claim seems to be taken for granted in most of the literature.¹ I wish to argue that this is misguided, and that only the second claim is supported by the text. In relation to individuals, general justice is a characteristic of actions, and not an ethical state. This is not to say that Aristotle never refers to an individual as just. It is to say, however, that in his considered account, this should be seen as a shorthand way of referring either to actions, or to characteristics of the individual in question that are not identical to justice.

I will first outline a problem that follows from seeing general justice as an ethical virtue, and argue that it is difficult to say what general justice as an ethical virtue amounts to in relation to the other ethical virtues. If some other specific ethical virtue is what explains an action, then what does it mean to claim that general justice too is an ethical virtue? I then go through much of the textual evidence, arguing that Aristotle might be said to be less clear than we tend to be as to the status of general justice

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¹ In his introductory remarks, Young (2006) states that “[f]or Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, each in his own way, justice is the first virtue of individual human beings ... Aristotle argues in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (EN) that justice (in one use of the term) counts as the whole of virtue and that (in another use of the term) it is the virtue that expresses one’s conception of oneself as a member of a community of free and equal human beings: as a citizen” (p. 179). And Kraut (2002) conveys a similar picture, in saying that “whoever is just in the broad sense of the word will possess every other ethical virtue as well” (p. 107). For Kraut (2002), cf., e.g., also p. 102. For Young (2006), cf., e.g., also p. 181. Similar claims are made by, e.g., Joachim (1951), e.g., at p. 151; Grant (1885), 1, pp. 96, 97; Broadie (1991), pp. 110–18; Miller, Jr. (1995), pp. 68–69.

vis-à-vis ethical virtue. On the contrary, there is a rather strong tendency on Aristotle's part to align general justice with law and activity rather than with ethical virtue. The tendency is pronounced not only in Aristotle, but in the tradition before Aristotle, too. Armed with this direct and indirect evidence, I return to two crucial and very difficult passages in *E.N.* v.1 and attempt to articulate an understanding of them. According to this alternative interpretation, Aristotle does indeed align general justice with activity rather than with ethical virtue.

I A PROBLEM

We can begin by noting a distinction that Aristotle draws in v.1–2 between two kinds of justice, particular justice and general justice. Particular justice is apparent in cases where, say, agents are required to divide a limited good, such as food or money. To be sure, the notion of particular justice has difficulties of its own.² But in such cases, we can, for instance, meaningfully speak of what it is like to be in that state, we can define a specific just action according to some variant of the doctrine of the mean, and we can make sense of the claim that there is a specific virtuous state which explains the act *qua* just. For these reasons, then, there is no doubting that particular justice is an ethical virtue.

To strengthen our grasp of the difference between particular and general justice, it will help to consider Aristotle's argument for the claim that the former is in fact an ethical virtue. To a great extent, Aristotle argues for this claim by establishing that particular justice has its own motivational structure – that, as it were, there is an answer to the question, “What is it like to have particular justice?” He does this by setting up a scenario with the same action as far as external factors go (that of adultery), but different desires on the part of the agent (*E.N.* v.2, 1130a24–32). What sets particular injustice apart from appetite, motivationally, is that it consists in a sort of appetite for shared goods which is inherently also a desire for gain, not absolutely, but in comparison to another (i.e., a combination of *epithumia* and *thumos* that is all its own). Aristotle gives us nothing comparable to go on when it comes to general justice, however. Through all the analyses of Book v, he presents us with no hint of what it might be like to be just in this sense.³

² Cf., e.g., Williams (1980).

³ Aristotle does demand a certain intellectual virtue from both lawmaker and judge in v.9, according to which being just in this specific context requires being wise (*sophos*), knowing (*gnōnai*),

In Chapter 6 of *E.N.* II, Aristotle defines an ethical virtue as a state (*hexis*) that decides, consisting in a mean, relative to us, defined by reason.⁴ He adds that ethical virtue is a mean between two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency in feelings and in actions. Now this latter concretization of what an ethical virtue consists in has been subjected to much criticism in recent years.⁵ However, whether we sympathize with his theory or see it as an instance of “completely misguided science-cum-metaphysics” on Aristotle’s part,⁶ it does seem to represent his actual view. The doctrine of the mean is an integral part of the essence of an ethical virtue as stated in its definition. “Hence, as far as its substance and the account stating its essence are concerned, virtue is a mean” (1107a6–7).⁷

If we consider general justice in this connection, we immediately find an independent reason for concluding that general justice is not an ethical virtue on Aristotle’s own defining account. An ethical virtue is a mean in two ways: in action and in feeling. In feeling, of course, there is no mean specific to general justice because, in every instance, justice will be served by whatever mean is relevant to the particular ethical virtue justice is somehow said to encompass. The situation is the same if we look for the mean in action. For here, too, we have to revert to the mean as defined by the ethical virtue purportedly a part of justice, in which case justice does not have its own mean.⁸ On both counts, the definitive account of ethical virtue does not comfortably allow justice the status of being one.

There is a more fundamental issue lurking behind these facts about Aristotelian general justice. In more detail, of course, the assumption so widely shared today is not simply that general justice is an ethical virtue, but that it is an ethical virtue by being the sum of the other ethical virtues as they relate to another. What does one mean when one claims that

eidenai), and comprehending (*sunienai*; cf. esp. v.9, 1137a9–14). This does nothing towards establishing justice as identical to any one, or a sum of, the ethical virtues, however.

⁴ 1106b36–1107a2. For a summary of these features, see *E.N.* III.8, 1114b26–28. For Aristotle’s definition of virtues in relation to an exhaustive classification of everything falling under the genus of conditions arising in the soul, see *E.N.* II.5 1105b19–1106a13.

⁵ Cf. not least Hursthouse (1999b), taking issue primarily with Urmson (1980).

⁶ Hursthouse (2006), which recapitulates and adds to the earlier view.

⁷ In translating from the *E.N.*, I follow Irwin in Aristotle (1999) unless otherwise indicated. Young (1988) argues that the words *mesotês* and *meson* mirror a distinction between a mean state and the intermediate aimed at in action and emotion. Most scholars, however, do not seem to think there is any system to Aristotle’s usage in this respect.

⁸ Alternatively, we can attempt to construe the mean on the model of particular justice. In that case, it will not be definable as the single individual’s mean, but only as a mean in a relation between two individuals. And this certainly does not fit the recipe for a mean in ethical virtue.

justice just *is* the sum of the other ethical virtues in their other-regarding or social dimension (or something to that effect)?

The bottom line is that Aristotle is a realist about the ethical virtues. Aristotle's theory of the virtues and vices is meant as a factual account of human beings, and he is quite clear that just acts which stem from an individual's ethical dispositions are always to be explained in terms of one or several of those virtues. The virtues are stable and controlling elements in human life. They are a precondition for happiness, and the analysis in terms of virtues and vices gives us a truthful ethical representation of human beings. Aristotle speaks of virtues and vices as real causal factors – they are what make us hit the target in practical affairs (cf. 11.6, 1106b32–33). Virtues are defined by their genus and species, exist in a certain number, and have a given causal range. So we should not take lightly the fact that Aristotle is read as simply identifying something called justice with the ethical virtues, albeit in their other-regarding modes.

Let us pursue Aristotle's realism about virtues a bit further. Our actions are traced back to our qualitative states in such a way that those qualitative states are a main ingredient in explaining the actions in the individual case. An act of rashness might or might not be traced back to rashness as an inherent feature of the character in question. But if it is so traced back, the vice forms the core of an explanation for the act. In short, a virtue or a vice is in this respect the crucial causal factor behind the act. And a correct description of the relation between an individual's features in terms of virtues and vices and his or her acts will yield an explanation of the act.

Their status as causal factors means that if general justice is an ethical virtue, then there should be something it does that is not already done by whichever other virtue is in play. And since we also want to say that justice somehow *is* the sum of the other virtues in interpersonal settings, we are at a loss as to just what this is. On pain of doing away with the principle of contradiction, we have to make a choice between justice and whatever virtue is in play. (And correspondingly for the situation with injustice vis-à-vis the vices.)

Any analysis of virtues is legitimate only by being about what is really there, by "carving reality at the joints," as it were. But this makes it difficult to find a way of specifying what one is saying when one claims that justice is an ethical virtue which is somehow identical to the other virtues. If general justice is an ethical virtue, then general justice is the crucial causal factor in just acts, and truthful accounts of the relation between justice as an ethical virtue and the just act will explain the act

to us. However, the other ethical virtues already do this job. So it would seem that general justice is not a virtue, since there is no job that it does.

One might wish to claim that its quality of being other-regarding is what makes justice into an ethical virtue of its own, but this will not do. For this is not special to justice: *all* the established ethical virtues have an other-regarding side to them, although this differs in degree from one virtue to another. Some virtues, like courage, are usually thought of as less other-regarding and more self-regarding than others, generosity, say. But being generous or courageous means being generous or courageous in relation to others whenever that is the right thing to do – in the case of generosity, always, in the case of courage, sometimes. After all, it isn't as if Aristotle's presentation of the virtues in *E.N.* II–IV does not already include a full social or other-regarding dimension. Nor would anyone want to claim that the other-regarding aspect is now, in Book V, cut off from them and allotted to justice instead.

One can, of course, still claim that the interpersonal aspects of the practical sphere are worth a separate investigation, and no one would deny that. But this does not amount to justifying the establishment of a new ethical virtue. There is precisely nothing new with general justice, considered as an ethical virtue; if the ethical virtue in question is, say, generosity, then generosity takes care of the other-regarding dimension as well as every other feature relevant to the determination of the phenomenon *qua* ethical virtue. Considered as an ethical virtue, general justice seems to be something that cuts across all the other virtues while bringing nothing of its own to the table. We can call this the “problem of double determination”: the challenge to justify, on Aristotelian grounds, the claim that justice is an ethical virtue which is identical to one aspect of the other virtues.

But could not justice still somehow denote the ethical virtues as a whole, of which they are then parts? A result of trying out this strategy is that one is immediately reminded that Aristotle has already worked out such a whole in his theory of the virtues. This central tenet of his ethics is usually referred to as the “reciprocity of the virtues” doctrine, which Aristotle expounds at *E.N.* VI.13 (cf. esp. 1144b32–1145a2). The details of this story make up a literature of their own, but most scholars would agree that the ethical virtues should be seen as somehow interlocked with each other and with the intellectual virtue of *phronêsis*. The relations between each and all are such that one can only be said to fully possess one virtue if one possesses all the others as well. Nowhere in this treatment is justice mentioned, however. On the contrary, if we were looking for a position as

that which ensures a unity of the virtues, we find that that spot has been taken by *phronêsis*. More striking still, given an interpretation according to which justice is an ethical virtue spelled out as the sum of the ethical virtues in relation to another, nowhere in the book on justice is the idea of the unity of the virtues picked up.

The problem of double determination, by justice and whatever virtue(s) is really doing the work, supports the suspicion that, while Aristotle believes in virtues as really amounting to states of the soul, he cannot straightforwardly believe the same about general justice. The conclusion is that general justice cannot simply be an ethical virtue which at the same time is identical to the sum of the other ethical virtues, as this sum applies to one's dealings with other human beings.

2 TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

I have tried to establish that there are reasons why Aristotle should not identify general justice with ethical virtue in its other-regarding aspect. However, there are also clear indications in *E.N.* v that he in fact does not identify the two. Aristotle in the *E.N.* does sometimes characterize individuals as just, as when he says that we become just (*dikaioi*) by performing just actions (*E.N.* II.I, 1103a34–b1), or that some people who do just actions are not thereby just (*E.N.* VI.I2, 1144a13–14). But even if general and not particular justice should turn out to be the reference of some of these passages, these formulations by themselves are merely shorthand expressions, in the sense that they do not amount to a claim on Aristotle's part that general justice is an ethical virtue. Furthermore, in his more careful discussions in Book v, it is surprisingly difficult to find instances of such straightforward usage that unambiguously concern general justice. On the few occasions where it does happen, the immediate context presents us with various modifications concerning how we should take the initial characterization. I shall argue that the passages from Book v that appear closest to identifying justice as ethical virtue can reasonably be read as doing nothing of the sort. Two of these passages, *E.N.* v.I, 1129b11–1130a1 and v.I, 1130a5–13, will be considered in detail in section 5, below.

There are places in *E.N.* v that have been taken to confirm an unproblematic identification of justice as an ethical virtue on Aristotle's part. Not surprisingly, the opening of Book v is chief among them. After raising a series of introductory questions, Aristotle treats us to the following assertions. "We see that the state everyone means in speaking of

justice [*dikaiosunê*] is the state that makes us doers of just actions, that makes us do justice and wish what is just. In the same way they mean by injustice the state that makes us do injustice and wish what is unjust" (v.I, 1129a6–10). It is crucial, however, to consider the context in which the assertion is made. We would be wrong in accepting this passage as a report on doctrine on Aristotle's part. It is true that Aristotle here starts out from justice conceived as a state. But his treatment of the notion of justice as a state is a reporting of general views, not of his own considered judgment.⁹ Aristotle introduces the above remarks by saying "[l]et us examine [the questions] by the same type of investigation that we used in the topics discussed before" (1129a5–6). This same *methodos*, described in detail in connection with those earlier discussions (1.4–5), is what is often known as Aristotle's dialectical method. As is well known, an initial stage in this process is *tithenai ta phainomena*, which includes setting out the relevant *endoxa* for investigation. And as with the earlier discussions, says Aristotle, in the case of justice, too, our first task is to present those *endoxa*. Thus, he will first present the reputed and common opinions on the matter; that is, we should not take the material which follows as his own conclusions.

This makes it reasonable to take the immediately following reports of what "everyone" means in speaking of justice, quoted above, as something which is supposed to perform that preparatory task, rather than the one of giving us Aristotle's final word on the matter. The highly tentative nature of those views is further stressed when Aristotle goes on to say: "Let us also, then, begin by assuming this in outline [*proton hōs en tupō(i) hupokeisthō tauta*]" (1129a10–11).

Some forms are stronger contenders than others for the label "ethical virtue" in Aristotle's nuanced terminology (*dikaiosunê*, *dikaios/dikaion*, [*to*] *dikaiopragein*, *dikaiōma*, [*to*] *dikaioussthai*, *adikos/adikon*, *adikêma*, [*to*] *adikein*, [*to*] *adikeisthai*, *adikia*).¹⁰ As for the rest, they do not seem even

⁹ It is not easy to determine who Aristotle speaks of as "everyone" in the last passage. Gauthier and Jolif (1970) mention the possibility that the reference might be the Platonists (a reference for *pantes* which they think is exemplified at *E.N.* vi.13, 1144b21), but without subscribing to that possibility. (The question is made even more difficult by the historical evidence considered in section 4.)

¹⁰ I shall not be concerned with the ambiguous notion of *tolho epieikês* (v.10, 1137a31–1138a3), which is beset with enormous difficulties of its own. Suffice it for the present purposes to point out that Aristotle's professional *epieikês* concerns the *intellectual* virtue of the lawgiver, while the traditional idea of someone who undemandingly takes less than his share imports the notion of a state which is unambiguously related to *particular* justice. For one solution concerning this specific notion, which consists in relating it to the Aristotelian virtue of benevolence, see Horn (2006), esp. pp. 164–66.

to hint of a claim towards denoting justice as a state of character; but *dikaiosunê*, the term Plato uses in the *Republic* for the overarching virtue of the perfectly virtuous soul, and *dikaiosladikos*, in that they denote persons, do. Let us go through some central instances of these occurrences from Book V, in order to suggest that they do not oblige Aristotle to such an identification.¹¹

The occurrences of *dikaiosunê* at 1129a3, 5, 7, and 26 were explained above as belonging to the endoxic part of Aristotle's investigation. (1129a26, also stressed by Aristotle's use of the verb *eoika*, only provides the statement that *dikaiosunê* would seem to be said in several ways.) At the very end of Book V, we find the following formulation: "So much for *dikaiosunê* and the other ethical virtues" (V.11, 1138b13f.). For several reasons, however, this does not amount to the assertion that general justice is an ethical virtue. First, the meaning might very well be "about justice, and the other qualities, i.e., the ethical virtues."¹² Second, the reference might be to particular justice only. Third, even if that were not the case, this sort of rounding off of a discussion is typical of Aristotle. It serves to re-identify the topic in the same terms with which it was introduced, and in this case, those terms were defined by the *endoxa*.¹³

Moving on to instances of the term *dikaios*, we find that 1129a33, too, forms part of the endoxic discussion leading up to the final distinction between virtue and justice (cf., e.g., *dokei dê*, 1129a32). Moreover, even though this instance of *dikaios* appears just before that crucial distinction is made, it is noticeable how Aristotle refuses to say without modification that being *dikaios* is identical to being ethically virtuous: rather, "both the lawful and the fair person will be just."¹⁴ Line 1129b11 merely states affirmatively that "the lawful person is just," but only to establish that "it

¹¹ We will naturally skip the passages devoted to particular justice (i.e., not least, V.2, 1130a14–V.5, 1134a16). As mentioned, Aristotle seems devoted to identifying particular justice as an ethical virtue. Furthermore, this claim seems to be at least partly generated by a perceived need to pin down *pleonexia* as a particular ethical vice. This also sits well with the fact that Aristotle's definitive account of the justice/virtue relation, considered below, explicitly limits the range of this conclusion to general justice (V.1, 1130a8–13).

¹² Note Bywater's punctuation: *kai tôn allôn, tôn ethikôn aretôn, diôristhō*. I owe this point to Sarah Broadie.

¹³ Similarly, the preview in *E.N.* 11.7 does not treat *dikaiosunê* as on a par with the ethical virtues, but rather as something separate from them, like the excellences of reason. The clear separation of the ethical virtues and justice in this preview list is in itself an indication of Aristotle's unease when it comes to identifying the two with each other.

¹⁴ *Dêlon hoti kai [ho] dikaios estai ho te nomimos kai ho isos*, 1129a33–34. There is a further possibility as far as this passage is concerned, since the *ho* has been deleted by Bywater. But the manuscript reading that "the lawful person and the equal person will both be the just person," anyway, makes no difference given the context.

clearly follows that whatever is lawful is in some way just" (1129b12). The point is clearly to characterize persons as just by reference to their actions (by looking to whether, or to what extent, their actions conform to law), and has no import in the direction of defining a character trait.

As for *adikos*, there is no separate story to be told about 1129a31, since it only mirrors the characterization *dikaïos* at 1129a33. Likewise, 1129b11 mirrors the characterization *dikaïos* in that same line (i.e., 1129b11), while 1129a3, the opening sentence of *E.N.* v, unsurprisingly makes no commitments beyond naming the subject of the book. At v.8, 1135b22–25, persons are characterized as *adikoi*, but this is in the same breath spelled out in terms of the act being caused by vice (*dia mochthêrian*, b24).

I do not here have occasion to consider individually the instances of *dikaïos* and *dikaïosunê* in the corpus outside Book v. On a general level, I maintain that the same explanation should be applied to them as to the ones in Book v. They are best understood as shorthand forms of expression that do not ultimately amount to a considered identification of general justice and ethical virtue.¹⁵

3 JUSTICE AND ACTIVITY

The argument up to now has been primarily negative. If justice is not unproblematically to be subsumed under ethical virtue, then how should we think of it? I now wish to argue in a more positive vein that there is a marked tendency in Aristotle to identify general justice with activity. Although the two strands of argument are logically independent of each other, the conclusion that justice is not identifiable as an ethical virtue is shared by both.

Strikingly, and in contrast to our standard picture of Aristotelian justice, a characterization Aristotle himself seems to settle on is not one in terms of ethical virtue,¹⁶ but in terms of law and action:

What is unjust is divided into what is lawless and what is unfair, and what is just into what is lawful and what is fair. The injustice previously described, then, is concerned with what is lawless. (v.2, 1130b8–11)

Hence there is ... a way for a thing to be unjust that is part of the whole that is contrary to law. (v.2, 1130a22–24)¹⁷

¹⁵ In the *E.N.*, the following are central instances outside Book v. *Dikaïosunê*: 1108b7; 1127a34; 1155a24, 27; 1173a18. (*Ho*) *dikaïos*: 1103b1, 15; 1105a18ff.; 1105a29; 1124a27; 1131b8; 1155a28.

¹⁶ Similarly, the relation between injustice and vice often amounts only to an indirect alignment in terms of reference: cf. *epanaphora*, *E.N.* v.2, 1130a29.

¹⁷ Cf. also, e.g., v.6, 1134a28–30. Outside Book v, cf. also *E.N.* vii.13, 1162b25f.: "There are two ways of being just, one unwritten, and one governed by rules of law [*eoike de, kathaper to dikaion esti*

The role of action or activity is further spelled out as follows:

Now the law instructs us to do the actions of a brave person – not to leave the battle-line, e.g., or to flee, or to throw away our weapon; of a temperate person – not to commit adultery or wanton aggression; of a mild person – not to strike or revile another; and similarly requires actions that are according to the other virtues, and prohibits those that are according to the vices. (v.1, 1129b19–25)

The law orders us [*prostattei*] to live according to each virtue [*kath' hekastên aretên*], and it forbids us to live according to each vice. (v.2, 1130b23–24)

[S]ome just actions [i.e., those that belong under general justice] are the legal prescriptions in accordance with each virtue [*kata pasan aretên*]. (v.11, 1138a5–6)¹⁸

Justice to Aristotle is a phenomenon inherently dependent on the greater community and its laws or norms (*nomoi*).¹⁹ The law, building upon and extending the constitution, constitutes the frame of reference for justice. Of course, the states which should ideally be expressed through the actions Aristotle mentions are the virtues. But it is *qua* actions that they are identified. And this is not surprising, since the direct reference of law is after all people's acts and omissions. Furthermore, *kath' hekastên aretên*, as we know, does not imply *with* virtue.²⁰ The same goes for Aristotle's identification of general justice in terms of *ho nomimos*, "the lawful one," in his summary differentiations between particular and general justice.²¹ In the *E.N.*, Aristotle does not acknowledge *ho nomimos* as someone whose intentions are cued towards upholding and respecting the laws. The denomination *nomimos* as Aristotle applies it here is clearly to be

ditton, to men agraphon to de kata nomon].” For an interpretation of general justice in Aristotle which takes the judicial aspect as highly central, see Barker (1959), esp. pp. 333–35, 337–38.

¹⁸ I have rendered *kata* as “in accordance with ...” rather than Irwin’s “expressing ...” in these quotations.

¹⁹ Aristotle’s conception of natural justice brings out this feature of justice very clearly. Justice in Aristotle is essentially bound to the political sphere, that is, to the sphere of human communal interaction in the political community or *polis* as this is ruled by law. And natural justice does not allow us to speak of justice as something connected directly to the individual, but only as a part or aspect of a sphere defined in terms of established communities. “One part of what is politically just is natural, and the other part legal [*nomikon*]” (v.7, 1134b18–19). Only on the level of the political community can something be determined as just or unjust, whether we look to that part of justice which is naturally just or to its non-natural, merely legal part. Natural justice does not provide us with a way of defining justice independently of some established constitution; and so, there is no justice as a principle belonging to the individual. Accordingly, in his criticism of the sceptic about natural justice, the lesson to be drawn from his famous dictum “fire burns both here and in Persia” (v.7, 1134b26) is not one about geographical places, but about communities. In the discussion of justice, “Persia” (*en persais*, lit. “among the Persians”) and “here” are not to be taken as geographical areas, but as examples of (types of) political entities.

²⁰ *E. N.* v.2, 1130b18–20 seems to swing both ways in this regard, in speaking of justice first as in accordance with (*kata*) virtue, and then as being the use (*chrêsis*) of virtue. More on the meaning of *chrêsis* in section 5 below.

²¹ *E.N.* v.1, 1129a33 (cf. 1129b1); v.1, 1129b11–14.

taken purely externally, as “law-abiding” irrespective of the agent’s intention or virtue.²²

4 BACKGROUND

We have what seems like a primary identification of justice in terms of action. This is something which seems reasonable enough given our earlier discussion of the problem of double determination. Very roughly, it seems that justice is primarily found in actions taking place in the law-governed community, while the ethical virtues – courage, generosity, and the rest – are the ideal states of the individuals involved in those activities. While ethical virtues and vices are ultimately defined as the states of the individuals, justice is what is shown up in actions, from the point of view of law; that is, in the eyes of and for the purpose of the community.²³

At this point, it will be instructive to take a brief look at Plato. Not only is he one of our best sources for seeing what sort of questions Aristotle addresses on a number of issues but also, and more concretely, it is impossible to imagine that his *Republic* did not form an important part of the intellectual background for Aristotle when he worked out the discussion of justice in Book v of the *E.N.* Indeed, the centrality of the *Republic* to Aristotle’s thought is attested by specific correspondences between texts in the *E.N.* and the *Republic*, such as the reference to justice as “another’s good” at v.1, 1130a3 (cf. *Rep.* 1 343c) and the discussion of knowledge as a source of opposite actions at v.9, 1137a9–26 (cf. *Rep.* 1 334ab). At the same time, the *Republic* also tells us something about available preconceptions of justice outside Plato’s philosophical theory. The *Republic* thus presents us with two classes of relevant Aristotelian *endoxa*: *endoxa* of the many are represented not least by Socrates’ interlocutors, while the *endoxa* of the few (perhaps of only one) or of the wise are presented in the philosophical system expounded by Socrates, taken by most scholars to represent Plato’s own considered view. Although evaluating and keeping these two

²² Cf., e.g., *E.N.* v.2, 1130b9 and v.7, 1135a6. As the immediate context makes clear, the last of these instances furthermore refers explicitly to actions (*ta nomima*). And at *E.N.* x.9, 1180b4, *ta nomima* must mean something like “provisions of law.” Naturally, Aristotle must have been aware of the possibility of a disposition relating to law as such; we have a fine expression of it in Plato’s portrayal, in the *Crito* (50a–54e), of Socrates’ willingness to die for the laws. It is an interesting question in its own right where in Aristotle’s classificatory system we should place this disposition; and one which it would be difficult to answer without specifying which city’s laws are in question. Such an endeavor falls outside the scope of the present argument, however.

²³ This lack of a virtue-specific determination of Aristotelian justice is part of what makes Santas’s (2001) claim that Aristotle, when it comes to justice, provides a teleological and not a virtue ethical analysis (esp. pp. 268–88). Santas does not question justice’s status as a virtue, however.

dimensions apart is a constant challenge in reading Plato, something can still be said about each.

Cross and Woozley in their treatment break what they call “the popular view” of justice in the *Republic* into three components. Sticking to their trifurcation, we notice that the popular view in Plato’s *Republic* offers precious little hint of what we might philosophically develop into a conception of an individual’s virtue or character. The popular idea of justice is couched almost exclusively in terms of actions and practices. (i) The origin of justice is in the realization that “the evil of being wronged outweighs the good of doing wrong,” so that “men ... make agreements with each other neither to inflict nor to suffer wrong.”²⁴ In Glaucon’s words: “As a result, they begin to make laws and covenants, and what the law commands they call lawful and just. This, they say, is the origin and essence of justice.”²⁵ (ii) Justice is seen as a necessity (and not as a good) purely in terms of laws, practices, and their consequences, not in terms of personal qualities (*Rep.* II 359b–360d). It is a practice no one would uphold if he thought he would gain by practicing injustice. (iii) The practice is a reasonable one, for the relevant relationship is (not one between personal characteristics and actions, but) one between actions and a reputation for those actions. And the one performing just actions but thought to act unjustly would be worse off than the one performing unjust actions but believed to perform just actions.

At the risk of overstating the situation, it is almost as if the *Republic*’s project is not only to show that being just in the sense of being virtuous, or having a certain quality of your soul, is a good thing – but also to open up the very possibility that such a thing as being just, as the state of an individual, has any meaning at all. There is certainly no doubt that Plato recognizes a usage focused on interpersonal activities and institutions. First and foremost, justice and injustice are things a person or a state can practice or suffer. The popular and original view concerns actions, with little or no theorizing about internal states (as opposed to external reputations for those actions).²⁶

²⁴ See Cross and Woozley (1979), p. 69.

²⁵ *Rep.* II 359a. The judicial basis for the popular view of justice is respected in Plato’s positive account up to and including the final Myth of Er, a cosmic court case. Justice as primarily a question of laws and practices is a view also professed by Callicles at *Gorgias* 483a–484c, 492b.

²⁶ The move from the popular conception, as effect, to the notion of justice advanced by Socrates – that of a certain harmony as the state of one’s soul – as its ultimate cause, further corroborates the picture. For all four examples of the popular conception are clearly instances of activity, not of states: *Rep.* IV 442e–443a. I am grateful to Eyjólfur K. Emilsson for pointing this out to me.

Even to the extent that we can identify and isolate conventional ideas portrayed in Plato's work, the issue of popular usage relevant as background for Aristotle's treatment naturally goes beyond Plato's representation of popular usage. Plato has his own axe to grind, and even if he were simply out to give faithfully recognizable images of conventional opinion, that is not to say that he always succeeded. Luckily, our claim about popular usage does not depend solely on Plato. A wealth of other sources attest to a notion of *dikaiosunê* and *dikaios* as characterizing actions, habits, institutions, social usage, and traditions.²⁷ This is not to say that the terms do not have an additional meaning applying to the qualities or personalities of individuals. It is to say, however, that the standard usage is not what we might call proto-virtue-directed, but unambiguously focused on interpersonal actions and activities. It is in this context that we have to place the registered pre-Platonic usage of *dikaios/dikaiosunê* as a characteristic of cities, exploited by Plato in his *Republic*: characterizing cities as just does not come into play in extension from individual character, but as a way of expressing that a city exercises justice on an institutional level.

5 ARISTOTLE'S DETAILED ACCOUNT

Returning now to *E.N.*, v.I, 1129b11–1130a1 and v.I, 1130a5–13 are particularly crucial for their careful formulations regarding general justice. In his (1988), Irwin takes the former argument to be a demonstration that general justice is the whole of virtue, and breaks it down as follows. (1) Justice is what legislative science prescribes. (2) Laws (i.e., the products of legislative science) aim at the common benefit in all they prescribe. (3) Hence justice secures the common benefit by promoting happiness and its parts for the community. (4) Laws prescribe actions required by all the virtues. (5) Hence justice is the whole of virtue in relation to another, 1129b11–27.²⁸

Irwin then notes that "If (5) is to follow, (4) must mean that the laws seek to make citizens virtuous, not simply to make them do the actions that a virtuous person would do."²⁹ However, this would be a baffling argumentative oversight on Aristotle's part.

²⁷ See Dover (1974), pp. 184–87 for an array of examples from Demosthenes, Aischines, Amphis, Aristophanes, Deinarchos, Menander, Theophrilos, Thucydides, Xenophon, Isaios, Andokides, Hyperides, Lysias, and Gorgias. For a more detailed analysis of one instance, Morrison (1995) provides an elaborate argument that justice according to the Socrates of Xenophon's *Memorabilia* is simply conformity to law (see esp. p. 339).

²⁸ Irwin (1988), p. 623. ²⁹ Irwin (1988), p. 624n.1.

I propose we try to see what Irwin takes to be the problem rather as the solution. Aristotle is not out to identify general justice with virtue as a whole *tout court*. On the contrary, the passage can be taken to identify justice within the tightly interconnected dimensions of laws and actions, and not that of ethical states. I suggest rendering the passage, with its follow-up at 1129b30–33, as follows:

[T]his justice is *teleia* virtue, not as such, but towards another [*hautê men oun hê dikaiosunê arête men esti teleia, all' ouch haplôs alla pros heteron*] ... And justice is most of all the *teleia* virtue, in that it is the use of *teleia* virtue. And virtue is *teleia* in that the one who has it can use virtue not only towards himself [*kai teleia malista arête, hoti tês teleias arêtes chrêsis estin. teleia d'estin, hoti ho echôn autên kai pros heteron dunatai têt(i) arête(i) chrêsthai, all' ou monon kath' hauton*]. (1129b25–27, 30–33)

The reading of the text I wish to suggest, then, is that the claim made in the referent of (5) above is not that “justice is the whole of virtue in relation to another” (Irwin), but that this “justice is complete virtue, not as such but in relation to another” (1129b25–27). The import of “complete” (*teleia*) is then picked up and spelled out a couple of lines further down: justice is “complete virtue to the highest degree because it is the exercise [*chrêsis*] of complete virtue” (1129b30–31). Justice is identified not simply as virtue, nor simply as virtue in other-regarding settings, but as the *use* of complete virtue.

Furthermore, it is this second *teleia*, that is, the *teleia* of the virtue involved (not of justice), which makes that virtue such that the one who has it (that is, the virtue) can act virtuously in relation to another.³⁰ 1129b31–33 stipulates that complete virtue enables one to act virtuously towards another (*not* that justice is complete in that it enables one to act with virtue towards another). Aristotle straightaway makes this clear by adding, “for many are able to exercise [*chrêsthai*] virtue in their own concerns but unable in what relates to another” (1129b33–1130a1). The initial “justice is complete virtue” is thus unraveled as “justice is complete in being the use of complete virtue” and “complete virtue is virtue towards another.” Thus, justice is complete in being the *use* of virtue towards another, not in being virtue towards another.

The repeated use of the term *chrêsis* is emphatic. It is unique to these passages, in the sense that it is not used in a similar manner to characterize

³⁰ The use of *teleia* as a characteristic both of states and of activities echoes *E.N.* 1.7, where both the most complete virtue and the complete activity of *eudaimonia* are defined in terms of being *teleia*.

the ethical virtues in Books II–IV. On the contrary, we recognize this term from the earlier books precisely as Aristotle’s way of stressing the distinction between having and using – that is, between state and activity. The conceptual pair *ktêsis* (possession)/*chrêsis* (use) is how Aristotle brings home the difference between virtue and happiness, and is then also spelled out as the contrast between *hexis* and *energeia* (I.8, 1098b31–33; cf. also *E.E.* III.4, 1232a4–6). Aristotle’s use of the word is systematic in this respect, being his main way of indicating that an activity (*energeia*), in contrast to a state, is what is intended.³¹

To sum up, I suggest that 1129b11–1130a1 can be taken not as an argument that general justice is identical to complete virtue, but as an argument that complete virtue turns out to be virtue displayed in relation to another, and that justice will be the complete use of such complete virtue. This, and not simply the “towards another” clause, is what is meant by justice not being virtue as such (*haplôs*, 1129b26).

Aristotle’s initial “justice is complete virtue” (1129b25), then, is a statement which is unfolded in the lines that follow. The statement is not abandoned, or even modified: but Aristotle’s meaning depends, as his immediate comments tell us, on taking it in a particular way, explained in the immediate context.

Let us now look at the other crucial passage mentioned earlier, the summary at the end of V.1, 1130a5–13:

The worst person, therefore, is the one who exercises [*chrômenos*] his vice towards himself and his friends as well [as towards others]. And the best person is not the one who exercises virtue [only] towards himself, but the one who [also] exercises it in relation to another, since this is a difficult task. This type of justice, then, is the whole, not a part, of virtue, and the injustice contrary to it is the whole, not a part, of vice. At the same time our discussion makes clear the difference between virtue and this type of justice. For virtue is the same as justice, but to be virtue is not the same as to be justice. Rather, *qua* relation to another, it is justice, and *qua* a certain sort of state unconditionally it is virtue [*estimen gar hê autê, to d’einai ou to auto, all hê(i) men pros heteron, dikaiousunê, hê(i) de toiade hexis haplôs, arête*].³²

³¹ Cf., e.g., *E.N.* IX.2, 1165a33; *E.E.* II.1, 1219a1, a18, and b2; as well as *E.E.* III.5, 1233a5; cf. also *E.N.* I.10, 1100b27, IV.1, 1120a8.

³² I here divert from Irwin’s translation. Irwin renders the final sentence in the following way. “Rather, in so far as virtue is related to another, it is justice, and in so far as it is a certain sort of state unconditionally it is virtue.” This is a complex issue, and it seems to me that both readings can be defended. But reading “virtue” into the first of the two contrasted entries appears to confuse the distinction, between *aretê* and *dikaiousunê*, which the sentence is meant to establish. I also omit his “what it is to be” for *to einai* in both cases in the last but one sentence (1130a12), and render them simply as “to be,” since rendering them as “what it is to be” would entail taking for

It is striking how here, too, stress is placed on justice as exercise, activity, or use (*chrômenos*, 1130a6), contrasted with a corresponding emphasis on virtue as a state (*hexis*, 1130a13).

One might wish to insist that the stress on use or activity is merely a consequence of the other-regarding clause: we can relate to others only in action. But that will not do. For it is as true of any of the virtues as it is of justice that only in exercising the virtue can we relate to whatever it is we relate to when it comes to the virtue in question. Every ethical virtue has something in the world with which it requires the individual to engage. Courage, for example, is co-defined by the appropriate set of dangerous circumstances, and generosity is determined by a relation between an agent and whomever the agent is benefiting with external goods. Accordingly, the stress on activity or use is not to be brushed aside as an accidental feature of Aristotle's treatment.

Once we notice this particular caveat of Aristotle's formulations relating virtue and justice, we see that it tends to recur whenever he is out to give definitive statements on general justice. In v.2, we find the following summary of general justice marking a transition between Aristotle's treatments of general and particular justice. "Let us, then, set to one side the type of justice and injustice that corresponds to [*tetagmenê*] the whole of virtue, justice being the exercise [*ousa chrêsis*] of the whole of virtue, and injustice of the whole of vice, in relation to another" (1130b18–20). Again, the characteristic use of the term *chrêsis* is a clear signpost relating Aristotle's considered determination of justice to his analyses of activity.

Keeping in mind the arguments so far, it seems to me that if one came to these passages without the preconception that general justice is an ethical state, it would be quite obvious what Aristotle's general point is: while virtue is a state, justice is other-directed activity. If we take it that Aristotle simply holds injustice to be vice (with the usual caveat concerning social settings), then it becomes a mystery that he chooses formulations which, although exact, avoid saying so. If we take seriously Aristotle's careful differentiation between virtue and general justice, however, it becomes apparent that his formulations are perfectly suited to respect that differentiation. In contradistinction to the "identity theory" considered above, his formulations seem to allow for mere correspondence between general justice and ethical virtue.

granted that *to einai* – "to be" or "being" – is here meant as identical to *to ti ên einai* – "what it is to be" or "essence." This is not an exclusive distinction, since a difference in being usually entails a difference in definition, but the issue is of some importance for which passages to consult in trying to make sense of it.

It is not easy to say how we should take the two final sentences (1130a12–13). That X and Y are the same (*hê autê*), but that *to be* (*einai*) X and *to be* Y are different, somehow makes a point of separating two things while at the same time keeping them together. Although they are identified in the same instances, to be general justice and to be virtue are not the same. The idea seems to be that general justice and virtue are the same – that is, they identify or point to the same things – while to be justice is not the same as to be virtue – that is, that they have different “being,” essence, or definition.

Let us try to cash out this distinction in terms of the two different perspectives we suggested in section 3. It is never simply as stemming from an individual’s state that an action is just. Rather, a good action can admit of two epithets. *Qua*, let us say, generous in the full sense, it stems from an individual with the ethical virtue of generosity. *Qua* just in a full sense, the same action conforms to what the laws order one to do. What is just is ultimately determined in terms of what upholds the constitution as the form of the *polis*, while what is generous is ultimately determined in terms of the virtue and happiness of the individual. If both constitution and individuals are ideally good, the constitution of the *polis* will support the happiness of the citizens as their individual constitutions do, and the same act will be generous and just.³³ This does not imply, however, that what it is for the act to be just is the same as for it to be generous. Moreover, this difference is also of practical importance, since Aristotle seems to think there never have been and never will be such ideal constitutions or such ideal individuals. For just actions, the primary criterion remains that the act is in accordance with law.

An addendum: the preceding argument does not depend on it, but the formula “X and Y are the same (*tauton*), but their being (*einai*) is different/not the same” recurs in several other places in the corpus. I do not have occasion here to go into the metaphysical implications of its uses, but one usage, where the difference in being is spelled out as a difference between potential and activity (*energeia*), or between two or more potentialities in relation to one activity, is well attested.³⁴ This in itself would appear to be a reason for thinking that the difference Aristotle is getting

³³ So when his focus is on the laws’ educational potential for virtue, Aristotle speaks of just actions that stem from an individual with the relevant ethical virtue. Cf. v.2, 1130b25–29.

³⁴ Among the clearest examples are, for the first, *De Anima* 11.12, 424a25; for the second, *De Anima* 111.2, 425b26–27, 426a15–17; *Physics* 111.3, 202b5–10, 13–16. Other sites where the formula is employed are *Metaphysics* 12.10, 1075b4–6; *Physics* 111.3, 202b5–10; *E.N.* 1.8, 1141b23–24; *Topics* 1.4, 133b34; *D.A.* 111.2, 426a15–17; *D.A.* 111.7, 431a12–14; *D.A.* 111.7, 431a17–20.

at is a distinction in terms of activity and potentiality – whether the relation should be one of a potentiality (virtue) relating to an activity (the just and virtuous action), or of two potentialities (the city's and the individual's, respectively) relating to one activity (the same action).

My suggestions concerning both of these passages are of a far less conclusive nature than what I hope was established in the previous sections. Still, I tentatively conclude that these passages, as did the earlier ones, stress activity as definitive of general justice in a way which we do not recognize from Aristotle's treatment of the ethical virtues.³⁵ Justice is not the final word on virtues, and virtues are not the final word on justice.

6 FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

To the extent that I am correct in diagnosing some reluctance on Aristotle's part to identify justice as an ethical virtue, I take it that the problem of double determination and the specifically law-determined sphere of justice will be main motivations for it. There might be further considerations, however, that serve to push Aristotle in the same direction. For one, there is a metaphysical side to Aristotle's theory of the *polis* which might be relevant to this strong tendency to pinpoint justice in terms of action. For action is, as we saw above, the domain of law. And its judicial constitution, to Aristotle, is the form of the *polis*. As David Keyt has argued, the first chapters of the *Politics* are devoted to explaining how the political community is a natural entity which is in fact prior to the individual.³⁶ Correspondingly, our status as the most political of animals is argued for from the premise that we have language in order to be able to indicate the just and the unjust (I.2, 1253a7–18). Now perhaps this priority of the *polis* over the individual human being as a natural entity, too, is something which makes it correct to think of being just as ultimately a characteristic of political communities rather than of individuals. If so, the justice-related activity going on in a *polis* is in some central sense the activity of the *polis* rather than of the individuals involved.

We might develop this line of thought by comparing, as Aristotle himself does throughout *E.N.* VIII.9–11, justice to the phenomenon of friendship. The distinction between states (*hexeis*) and their “use” (*chrêsis*) will sometimes be as simple as the difference between being able to do

³⁵ This difference thus cuts across the contrast between good human beings and good citizens as this is sketched at, e.g., *Politics* III.18.

³⁶ See *Politics* I.2 1253a18–19, 25–26. For discussion, see Keyt (1991), pp. 120, 126–31.

something and actually doing it. A very simple case (from outside the field of ethical virtues proper) is the difference between being able to clench one's fist and actually clenching one's fist. In other cases, however, the relation between the two is not so straightforward. Complications arise not least as a result of the fact that most activities require something more than a given state of the agent. A paradigmatic case of a complex relation between being able to do something and actually doing it is friendship. In the case of friendship, which is a relation between individuals, it is not enough to point to the single agent's ability or state. So a friendship, says Aristotle, is not a virtue. It requires both reciprocity and sustained activity to exist (VIII.2, 1155b32–34 and VIII.5, 1157b11–13, 17–22, VIII.6, 1158a8–10, respectively). Neither one-sided friendly undertakings, nor mutually friendly dispositions without a level of activity, constitute friendship. Friendship is a relational activity, irreducible to any individual's state.

Something like this seems to be the case for justice as well. In what is admittedly only his introduction to the topic of friendship, Aristotle makes a point of the fact that “if people have friends, they have no need of justice, but if they are just they need friendship in addition” (VIII.1, 1155a26–27). The logical relation, then, would appear to be that friendship and justice overlap in such a way that somehow, friendship implies justice (cf. also, e.g., VIII.9, 1160a28–30 and the ensuing specifications). I say “somehow,” because we have to take into account both the possibility that Aristotle has particular justice in mind, and the possibility that he thinks of friendship as transcending justice rather than including it. The fact that he holds up concord (*homonoia*, VIII.1, 1155a24) as a common trait for the two, however, would seem to indicate that Aristotle thinks of both as covering the same ground: that of shared or interpersonal activity.³⁷

In being by definition interpersonal, the domain of justice will to a great extent consist of interaction not referable to any one individual. As the state of an individual, virtue allows one to perform just action. But as an instance of justice, the action will often be an interaction requiring correct performance by two or more parties.

Of course, this will not always be the case. Many just actions are independent of the cooperative effort of others. But Aristotle's own emphasis

³⁷ A crucial contrast between justice and friendship is that while Aristotle goes as far as to derive all the central features of friendship from the relationship the good person has to himself, and thinks that interpersonal *philia* is secondary to intrapersonal *philia* (see *E.N.* IX.9, esp. 1166a1–33) he absolutely refuses any notion of justice as a relation internal to an individual: justice is inherently and irreducibly interpersonal (see V.7, 1134b9–10; V.9, from 1136a31; V.11, 1138b5–8).

on the close structural relationship between friendship and justice at least makes it likely that he has had something like this in mind when working out his conception of justice.

Another consideration which might also be of some relevance is the following. Aristotle makes a great deal of the fact that just interaction does not require ideal ethical characteristics from the individuals involved. That one may *adikein* without *adikon einai* is brought home at 1134a17, 21. (The passage concerns particular justice, but that should not pose a problem in relation to the present point.) Aristotle argues that justice is normally present in human enactments without being indicative of a corresponding degree of virtue in the *hexeis* of the agents. This is why, he says, it would be unwise to opt for a political system where the justice of the system depends only on the virtues of individuals. "This is why we allow only reason [*logos*], not a human being, to be ruler; for a human being awards himself too many goods and becomes a tyrant" (1134a35–b1).

The assertion sits well with Aristotle's anthropology as we know it from other sources such as the *Politics* and the *Rhetoric*. Even well-turned-out human beings are less than perfect; the perfect specimen is so rare that even in constructing an ideal state we had better not depend on the unrealistic assumption that we will have recourse to such an individual. Except for such extremely rare occurrences, a human being will irrevocably have a tendency to work from a skewed perspective in cases where one's own well-being is concerned.³⁸ And without some external measures of control to counter or check one's impulses, the individual will moreover tend to become gradually corrupted towards the fulfillment of one's own ever more vicious desires. Aristotle is very much alive to the fact that power corrupts.

This is why we should not give absolute power to any single individual. The way to realize justice in our lives is, rather, by means of processes that involve formalized laws and the cooperation (or even the competition) of several individuals. It is through interaction rather than through some sole individual's action that we realize a sphere for justice and injustice.

But this is just to say that we have found another sensible reason internal to Aristotle's thought for working from a conception of justice

³⁸ It may even be that Aristotle thought this to be the case for any human being, regardless of their degree of perfection, as the following statement from the *Politics* would appear to indicate. "Perhaps, however, someone might say that it is a bad thing in general for a human being to have authority and not the law, since he at any rate has the passions that beset the soul" (111.10, 1281a34–36; Reeve's translation). Although Aristotle presents this as something like a hypothetical consideration, he does not counter the notion as such.

that in important respects remains autonomous in relation to his developed account of ethical virtue. For it is precisely because reason – here conceived as the intersubjective, judicial process – is a source of just action in a way that a single individual cannot be, that it makes sense for us to choose such a system rather than allowing the best individual among us to rule.

7 FINAL REMARKS

I have argued that Aristotle cannot really mean, and does not really say, that general justice is an ethical virtue. Given his realism, Aristotle's own theory of the ethical virtues is difficult to harmonize with justice as an ethical virtue. And the intellectual and popular background provides ample ground for considering activities and practices as an alternative. His solution, then, is to make activity, understood as action in the political community, his considered point of identification for justice. This solution seems to be respected in Aristotle's more nuanced explications of general justice, and allows him to face instances where the activity is anyway not reducible to the qualities of any single individual. It also fits well with his advocacy of a political system not definable in terms of the dispositions of the individuals of which it consists. More generally, the solution allows for a close connection between justice and ethical virtue, but without identification. Just interaction creates virtuous agents, while virtuous agents ensure just interaction.

I have focused on reasons Aristotle had for not identifying justice with ethical virtue. It is obvious, however, that there are also strong reasons for Aristotle to let his conception of justice remain heavily embedded in his elaborate theory of the virtues. Much of the *E.N.* is devoted, directly or indirectly, to analyses in terms of virtues, vices, and in-between states. From a slightly wider perspective, his political theory as a whole rests on virtue-theoretical ideas about the forming of individuals within the political framework. And in the even wider view, the notion of entities with qualities is the basic structure of reality as expounded in Aristotle's other works, whether we look to the *Metaphysics*, the *Physics*, or the biological works. Furthermore, in the Greek context – and certainly on Aristotle's understanding of that context – the question of justice is pervasive when it comes to specifics of interpersonal conflict, political power, and interstate relations of war and peace, issues that are both everyday and matters of life and death. So even if he has his reasons for ultimately denying a full identification of justice and ethical virtue, it is important to Aristotle

that his theory of justice remains intimately connected with his pervasive virtue theory.

One last word. All of the above considerations hopefully serve to highlight one major fact about *E.N. v*: it is this book, and not the famous programmatic statements of x.9 (from 1179b31 on), which forms the main link between Aristotle's ethical analyses and his political philosophy proper. The elaboration of justice in terms of interaction structured by law leaves little doubt that it is the political community which makes up the real subject of his discussion of justice.

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